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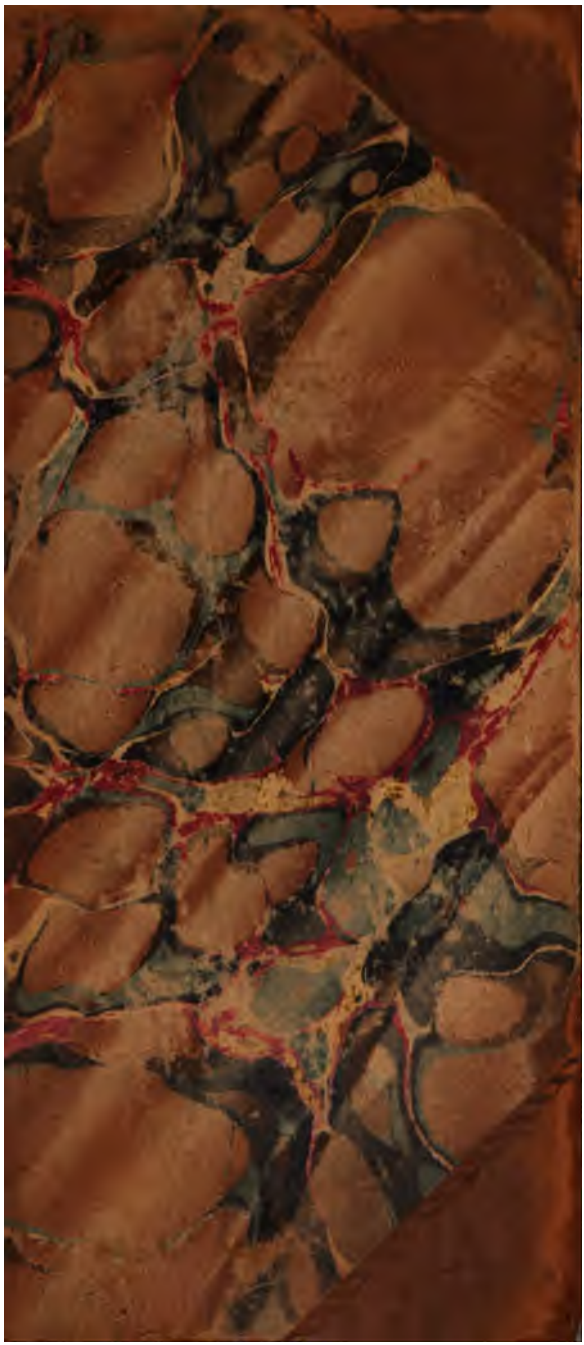

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NIGHTS

OF THE

ROUND TABLE:

OR,

ES OF AUNT JANE AND HER FRIENDS.

E AUTHOR OF "THE DIVERSIONS OF HOLLYCOT,"
LAN-ALBIN," "ELIZABETH DE BRUCE," &c. &c.

FIRST SERIES.

EDINBURGH:
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INTRODUCTION.

THIS little volume forms the first of a series intended chiefly for youthful readers. It has a slight degree of connexion with a preceding small work—THE DIVERSIONS OF HOLLYCOT, OR THE MOTHER'S ART OF THINKING. Each of the volumes is, however, complete in itself; and they are held together merely by unity of sentiment and design, and by some of the characters introduced into the first little book being further developed as actors or story-tellers at the ROUND TABLE.

The Tales and Conversations which form the present volume, are intended for readers of a more advanced age than such as may find amusement and instruction in the Chapters of Hollycot. In some of the stories, to which, for want of any known English name, I affix the title, BIOGRAPHICAL TALES, in adapting the story to my purpose, a slight degree of license is taken with unimportant

facts, though not nearly to the extent allowed in the historical novel. In the Tale of THE THREE WESTMINSTER BOYS, it is probable that the acquaintance I assume as existing between two of the school-fellows did not commence till a few years afterwards, when William and Edward were students in the Temple. In the Biographical Tale of THE TWO SCOTTISH WILLIAMS, which is to form part of the volume that appears next in the series, the history of the eminent individuals is strictly adhered to in every important point; and I would fall far short of my aim in conveying an impressive lesson, if the very letter as well as the spirit of the Tale were not in exact consonance with the truth, and if the young reader were not absolutely assured that they were living men, of whom he is told, and that such were their real sentiments, and such their actual doings throughout an illustrious career. It is needless to state how far some of the other Tales, which seem the least probable, are founded on fact. It will be better that they be found useful and inter-

BURGH, November 1831.

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The Second Series of NIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE will contain *The Quaker Family, or Modes of Discipline.—The Two Scottish Williams,*—and *The Little Ferryman.*

NIGHTS OF THE ROUND-TABLE.

MISS HARDING'S TALE.

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL.

SINCE it is my chance to tell the first story, (said Miss Jane Harding, on whom it may be remembered by the readers of the DIVERSIONS OF HOLLYCOT, the lot had fallen,) I should like to follow the most approved method of story-tellers, whether Mother Bunch, Scheherazade, or Lady Bluemantle; and as it is alleged that a story goes better off when the audience know something of the speaker, I must beg to say a little about myself, WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL. I assure you my own adventures though not very romantic, are, I have been told by my young auditors, very interesting; which can only be, I modestly imagine, from their truth in real life.

Ladies and Knights of THE ROUND-TABLE, if my history be good for any thing, it must be to teach you that "All is not gold that glisters," and that there is seldom either safety or happiness in ambitiously striving to get beyond the sphere in which our lot is appointed. My name, as most of you know," continued the lady, "is Jane Harding—Jane Aulmerle Harding: you also know that I was born in London. But some of you need to be told that I had a houseful of tall brothers, and grown-up sisters, and that I was the youngest of the family, by seven years. You may guess that the *cadette* was a favourite, a pet, a plaything, a darling, a plague; and, in short, a sadly spoiled child. I was not slow of acquiring the notion that "little Jane" was a person of vast consequence,—very clever, and would be pretty; for so I daily heard our lady visiters assuring my mother, by way of consolation for my original sallowness. One of my sisters was my governess, and a kind brother taught me writing and drawing: they were not the most attentive of instructors; but I lived, as Dr. Johnson somewhere says, in an atmosphere of knowledge, and my mind, like summer grass,

sprung in the night. From four years old a French lady, a former member of the *corps de ballet* of the Opera House, gave me instructions in dancing; and in this shewy accomplishment I was allowed to excel. At the public exhibitions of Madame Fringant, which I attended twice a-week, I listened to many affectedly-aside compliments made to my mother, on the grace and spirit of my air, and the ease and dignity of my carriage. No compliment was lost on me: I remember I was peculiarly grateful to one far-seeing old gentleman, an artist, who prophesied that sallow as I was, my little features were of a noble cast; and that notwithstanding those dark eyes, so large in my thin, pale face that they actually stared like those of a wild sea-bird, I would yet be the beauty of the family. This incense was the more grateful, as fat Mrs. Deputy Roberts, who had just been feasting her eyes on the plump beauties of her own rosy Emma, was good-naturedly pitying my mother the misery of my dingy plainness. Persons who suppose that they may with impunity talk either flattering nonsense, or heedless detraction, in the hearing of children, are grievously mistaken;

and indeed their careful avoidance of disagreeable subjects proves that they duly calculate the effects of their flattery.

When I returned from school on that day, I earnestly set about improving my personal charms, my model being rosy, blue-eyed Emma Roberts. The indigo water obtained from the laundress, took little effect on the large staring black eyes, which stared the more for their dyeing; but my sister's colour-box furnished me with a full crop of fresh-blown damask roses for my sallow cheeks, and, thus beautified, I longed to shew myself at table.

My condition among so many kind and fond relatives was peculiar: I was like a grandchild on a visit, rather than a little girl at home. Among the most active of my spoilers, if the indulgence of sensible people ever can spoil children, was my father. Though ever a kind, he had been a rather strict father with his elder girls; but little Jane was treated at first as a sort of animated toy, the darling plaything of his declining years, amusing, by her shrewd prattle, his hard-earned after-dinner-hour of relaxation. Though my mother and my sisters began to perceive my conceit, self-willed-

ness, and petulance, and to offer occasional checks, it was thought hard to mar "poor papa's" brief moments of enjoyment in his family circle, with reproofs and corrections of my faults and tendencies. Indeed my childish airs of vanity, my coquettish tricks, mimicking, as if instinctively, the woman; my turn for pleasantry, and shrewd, ready talent at excusing my errors, were to him and my brothers so exceedingly amusing, that I, like older wits, took admiration for granted, and was confirmed in my faults. I think it was not quite well-judged in these gentlemen to treat "Little Jane" rather as a Lilliputian lady of fashion, or a Queen of the fairies, than a little girl whose character was to form.

When I appeared at table, my painted cheeks and blued eyes were received with bursts of approbation; even my mother laughed aloud—I suspected *at* me; and the extravagance of the general mirth and admiration made "Little Jane" rather apprehensive that she was the subject of ridicule, which her vanity could not well bear. My suspicions were confirmed, when Cesar, the negro boy, who waited at tea, from broad grinning admiration of "Missey's" charms, proceeded to imitation, and

appeared before us, his black cheeks flaming in vermilion. I first laughed, then bridled and pouted; but the merry humour of my friends was irresistible. I read my own silly vanity in Cesar's grinning, happy face, washed off my mask of my own accord, and was thenceforth content to let my skin remain as nature had tinted it.

I will mention another trifling circumstance, which helped to cure me of self-conceit of a deeper character. I was lolling one evening on my father's knee, waiting to receive my usual modicum of three roasted chestnuts, when my mother happened to say, "Pray take care of my beautiful goblet, Mr. Harding,—water so hot will break it I fear." My father was mixing his wine with hot water, and he set down the jug till the water would get cooler.

"Such nonsense, mamma," said I, pertly, "how can water, which is *soft*, break glass?" My mother was going away, and did not hear me, but my father looked closely, and, as I fancied, admiringly, at his "clever little Jane."

"Do you think hot water cannot break glass, Jane?"

"Surely not, papa,—how should it stand to

reason, that water, which is soft,"—and I triumphantly repeated my former assertion, or, as I thought, rational argument. We were now alone at table. "So I find little Jane does not take things on hearsay,—quite right that," said my father, "she grows a reasoner—wiser than her mother."—"Oh, no, papa, don't say so,—only I am sure water which is soft," &c. &c.

"Suppose we try," said my father; and as I knew my mother was very careful of those richly-cut goblets, which she had lately got in a present from my Aunt Ellen, and often washed and put them away herself, I said I would wash them up for her. Sally, the housemaid, had secretly allowed me to wash china cups, on trial, before now. My own calabash basin was procured; papa gravely assisted me in collecting all the glasses and goblets on the table into it, and over them I directed him to pour the boiling tea-kettle. He warned me to pause—"I might be wrong." "Oh, no—nonsense!" He poured away. Crack! crack! My heart fluttered. My father looked at me, but I did not now construe his looks into admiration.

The havoc was complete! My eldest sister came

in. "All my mother's favourite glasses! ignorant, *conceited* child!" My mother came. "The cut wine goblets, mamma," said my sister, "my aunt's present—Jane has broken them all." My mother looked much displeased. "Jane has just learned that there may be truths beyond her comprehension," said my father. "I wish she had made her experiment at a cheaper rate," said my mother; but my father said, "Nothing could be too dear for so good a lesson. Jane had learned one of humility and self-distrust, that would, he hoped, last her for life."

My kind parents never said more to their weeping penitent, though my sisters sometimes, when I was saucy, reminded me of the broken glasses. It needed not; for I never forgot that dreadful, reiterated crack. Several other circumstances occurred about this time, which made me suspect I was not quite the prodigy I had imagined myself.

My father held a lucrative place under government, and besides managed the affairs of a wealthy nobleman, to whom my grandfather had been steward. The Marquis of Aulmerle was a widower, with an only daughter, the Lady Jane, for whom I

was named, though her little ladyship was but three or four months older than myself. A large share of my childish thoughts was occupied by this unseen name-mother; and a large place in my affections by another Jane, named for myself, the orphan child of a former servant of my father's. Jane Ford was boarded with her aunt, a poor sempstress, partly at the expense of my mother. She was my frequent playmate, the heiress of all my cast toys, frocks, and sashes,—the victim, also, of my childish caprices; for it was not long till I found out from my maid that Jane was a dependant, a humble, poor girl, whom it was vastly generous in me to patronize. Yet I loved her; I was her instructress, her champion, her liberal, if not very discreet friend. I shared with her my books, toys, and sweetmeats. At my solicitation she accompanied me to our dancing exhibitions, and to the play or pantomime in the holidays. My pleasures were incomplete without my *protegée*; for in this light I chose to consider her,—she the obliged, grateful, humble person, myself the generous patroness. Jane, as I grew older, was besides becoming necessary to me, in the double character of

confidante and flatterer; and I had overheard one of my sisters saying, "Well, with all her faults, Jane is not ungenerous; her conduct to Jane Ford proves that." This confirmed me in my part of generosity.

From nature and situation, my young companion had very early acquired the art of putting her passions in her pocket; so that our tempers seldom clashed, or if so, she always yielded.

I was among other things intolerably jealous of my *proetgée* having any *great* friend except myself, or those to whom I recommended her. Once, I remember, on hearing she had gone to Sadler's Wells, with Miss Emma Roberts, I disdained to speak to her for an hour; and when her humility had softened my wrath, I loftily told her, since she had got into good society she should keep there, and not forfeit her place by vulgar associations.

Jane was as usual all complaisance and humility; she indeed at no time either opposed my will or seemed to have any will of her own. My superior taste, talents, and accomplishments were her ever-grateful theme. It was overdone. I sometimes sickened of my own praises, and feared that instead

of an equal and a friend which I had no right to expect, I had found the sycophant hanger-on which my conduct had created. How could I hope to find in Jane Ford, the victim of my caprice, a generous, sympathising, candid friend. As we grew up my mother prudently wished to abridge our intercourse, rather I believe from kindness to Jane, than fears of a friendship which my pride and Jane's subservience made so hurtful to both of us. I outgrew many of the evil consequences of this association, thanks to the happy domestic circumstances in which I was placed, and the severe lessons I was soon fortunate enough to receive in the school of dependence. Jane Ford was less happily situated and exposed in her unprotected orphan condition to the full force of the mean envy and rankling hate, which the mortifications inflicted by the airs and arrogance of our superiors are so apt to engender. She never forgot, while submitting to my humours, and witnessing my vanities, that her grandfather had been head-gardener where mine was only steward; no great original disparity in our stock, loftily as we carried ourselves now. But the en-

vy, repining, and ambition of Jane Ford were to me later discoveries.

As my judgment ripened and guided my naturally quick sensibilities, and, as it were, inborn love of my orphan name-child, we lived much better together; the young patroness, all generous attention, proud of the talents and beauty of her pupil and friend; and the *protegée*, all affectionate flattery, and grateful acknowledgment.

I am afraid that when we tax our friends with ingratitude, we do not always calmly inquire whether our conduct has deserved gratitude, or if our actions are not in many instances, dictated rather by whims and vanities, than by a judicious and single-hearted desire to promote the welfare of the person whom we fancy we oblige, while in reality we merely gratify our own transient, kind humour. What did Jane Ford owe me for all the sashes, and trinkets, and ball-tickets, I bestowed on her? Less than nothing,—they had been positively injurious. I am unwilling to think that the same thing holds of the knowledge of fashionable accomplishments I had been able to impart, or that she had unconsciously acquired in my society; yet I fear that

this also may be true. I had shewn her alluring glimpses of a world of enchantment, which she was forbidden to enter save by some perilous or unhallowed approach. However true or false this may be in reasoning, it is certain in fact, that Jane felt all her obligations not only to me, but to my family, cancelled the moment that my mother, her best friend, proposed placing her in a house of business in the city, to learn to earn her bread. Yet this was the truest kindness hitherto conferred on her. It was enabling her to use those tools with which I had in part supplied her, to ensure her future respectability and independence. Of what substantial advantage were all the fineries and fashions I had bestowed on the orphan girl; the elegance and luxuries she had shared with me; or the slight degree of liberal accomplishment she had acquired, save to fill her with discontent and repining. She wept her degradation, and for the first time forgot to play the hypocrite, expressing open contempt of the line of life my mother pointed out for her, and of the unceasing toil and vulgar society to which she was consigned. It required all my address and influence to prevent the discovery and

consequences of her unreasonable complaints; yet I shared her griefs, and assuaged them by every art of consolation in my power; and what was more effectual, by every article of dress and sixpence of pocket-money that I could command. It was arranged between us, that when I married—an event of which neither of us entertained any doubt—Jane should live with me. "But who knows but I may marry myself," said Jane. "You remember what the fortuneteller told us—the coach and the fine house." I laughed, and repeated, "Who knows."

About this time an event occurred, which for a time delighted me. My father's connexion with the Marquis of Aulmerle produced considerable intercourse between the families. The death of her maternal grandmother had lately transferred the Lady Jane and her French governess from a remote seat in Northamptonshire, to Aulmerle Park in Surrey. The important commissions of the family were now often executed by my mother in town; and, among other matters, she ordered all Lady Jane's dresses from the house in which Jane Ford was placed. The elegancies of the wealthy high-born heiress,—the

trinkets, and toys, and books, and music, sent to her, were frequent subjects of my conversation with Jane. She had repeatedly seen the little lady my name-mother, when on a visit to an aunt, the dairy-woman of Aulmerle, of which great house we were indeed all a kind of vassals.

It happened one day, when Jane was with me, that the Marquis, who had been doing business with my father, was called for by Lady Jane and her governess. The young lady had come to town for a few hours only, to have her teeth inspected. I peeped curiously from behind the drawing-room curtains at my name-mother. I wished to thank her for the many little presents which, probably at the suggestion of her friends, she had sent me on my birth-days; and I longed to know her—her the happiest and most enviable, as I perceived she was the most blooming and beautiful, of all living creatures. I, alas! still remained the dark-eyed, dark-haired damsel, though my complexion had improved, they told me, to a clear brunette tint. She was fair as a cherub—locks of gold veiling full blue eyes, the rose of England blushing in her cheeks; the pure, unmixed English beauty, which, in childhood and

early girlhood, is so winningly lovely, so different from either the fishy whiteness of Holland, or the sallow, sandy fairness of Germany,—the transparent, celestial tints of the fair complexion to be found only in our own island or imagined in Paradise. I was seriously affronted by the assurance of Jane Ford that my own dark eyes out-dazzled Lady Jane's blue ones; yet this was perhaps the only occasion in which her flattery might not be wholly false, for the style of our beauty fairly admitted an honest difference of opinion and of preference.

My mother and sisters were abroad when the lady called. The Marquis begged a biscuit for his hungry little daughter. She alighted and skipped up stairs like a fawn, Mademoiselle, her governess, screaming and gibbering after her in vain. With what rapture of affection and pride did I receive her! If somewhat bashful at first with the high-born lady, five minutes re-assured me, and ten make girls sworn friends. She was even more lovely, or more rich in roses and lilies than I had imagined. I introduced Jane Ford, who now contrived to whisper her rapturous admiration of Lady Jane, in tones loud enough to be

overheard, and also to let the young lady know that, like myself, she was a born vassal of the great house of Aulmerle.

Jane assisted me in doing the honours of all the ham and chicken and all the cakes and jellies which the housemaid and myself could muster. Lady Jane, a novice in life, and in London, admired all she saw, and Mademoiselle "munched and munched," while my polite attention and a respectful observance to which she was little accustomed from her high-spirited pupil, gained for me approbation of my good accent and good mien. Well endowed with the good-humoured egotism of her country, Mademoiselle loved to flatter and to be flattered; and felt evident pleasure in making compliments, which, if not always delicately discriminative, were so warmly bestowed, that it was scarcely possible to doubt their momentary sincerity. Lady Jane, meanwhile, mimicked her grimaces and sharp vivacious movements, and made faces at her, scarcely behind her back. This proceeding rather disconcerted me; but Jane Ford, quickly adopting her ladyship's style, returned the grimaces with interest. These tricks, in a Marquis's daughter, were

neither I thought very good-natured nor very well-bred; but if not quite the prodigy I had imagined,—if less accomplished, less formed and informed than even my little self, I loved the Lady Jane, but the more with her "fair defects" or faults,—or for them.

The Marquis came up stairs to pay his respects to my mother, not knowing she was abroad, and to reclaim his daughter. I was standing in the middle of the room flourishing my tambourine, shewing Lady Jane a new step, and inviting an imitation, which to say the truth she attempted awkwardly enough. The Turkish costume was then a novelty in English domestic life,—my trousers, my tambourine, my attitudes, my dancing, and the comfortable state of her own stomach, drew forth the exclamatory praises of Mademoiselle, who gibbered French about me to the Marquis faster than ever French was spoken before or since. My airy movements had been arrested on his appearance. "Is this your daughter, Harding?" said he; and I thought a marquis might have said, "Mr. Harding" to my papa, but he did not. My father replied, "Yes, my lord—my youngest girl—my little,

spoiled, saucy Jane." I looked up, as if I would have said, had we been alone, "And you are my dear, big, saucy papa." The Marquis instantly recollected the history of my name, and introduced his daughter to me, whom he laughingly called my "venerable godmother." He said he would remain with the ladies, meaning us, till my father returned from the Bank. I was well used to good society, though not to lords, so my bashfulness soon were off, and I was excited by his praises and by the vanity of displaying my talents. I danced to him, to Mademoiselle's tuneless scream; I sang a French air and a Venetian canzonet; and Lady Jane shewed him my work, my French exercises, and my flower-drawings,—sad daubs they were! but she admired them probably on the same principle which made me adore her pink cheeks.

The Marquis was a cheerful, well-bred man, who did not think it necessary to assume state or dignity with his old steward's son; and when my mother returned, and found the very familiar, chattering footing we were all upon, she made some hurried apologies for "Little Jane's impertinence,—a sadly spoiled girl," she said, "among so many of us."

"For which reason I am going to steal her away from you, Mrs. Harding,—carry her off to Aulmerle Park to reform her, and make her a dutiful child. She must be a delightful companion to her godmother, Lady Jane."

Lady Jane, who had been whispering to her indulgent father this very request, flew to him in joy, jumping on his arm, and expressing her rapturous delight. I was equally overjoyed to visit Aulmerle Park, that grand ancient place, where Jane Ford's aunt had such a beautiful dairy,—for thus congruous were my ideas; to see the Prince of Wales, perhaps, whom my sisters had once seen there; and also that strange wild-fowl which came home from the Governor of New Holland, as a present to the Marquis.

I was thus honoured, principally I fear, for my tambourine and trousers; and my expectations of pleasure, in the visit, were about as reasonable as the motives of the invitation.

My mother would have parried the request, and said as much about "the honour" as people usually do when they wish to evade a disagreeable proposal; but the Marquis had no fears of her serious

opposition to "the honour;" and Lady Jane, young as she was, had no doubt of her own hereditary right to exact compliance from "dear Mrs. Harding," whom she affected to caress into the solicited permission. My mother spoke of the trouble a girl so young must give in any family, and more seriously of the interruption of my studies; but there Mademoiselle volubly broke in, protesting her alacrity in cultivating and forming "my fine mind," as if it had been the raising of a crop of mushrooms. Of her capacity, and the opinion which my English mother might entertain of it, she was a Frenchwoman—nay, more, a Parisian, and how could she be disturbed with doubts.

My mother complied at last with a very bad grace, secretly hoping the Lady Jane and her governess might soon tire of me; for the one, she knew that I was too independent and self-willed,—for the other, too shrewd and observing. My father scouted her prudent fears; besides complying with the wish of his patron, he believed that this visit would contribute to the health and pleasure of his "Little Jane;" and it was settled that he was to carry me down in August. But other things,

of some importance to me, happened before then; and, before taking you with me to Aulmerle Park, I must introduce you to other friends—my Spittalsfield Widow, and his Majesty George III.; for I made the acquaintance of both in the interval preceding my visit.

THE SPITTALSFIELD WIDOW.

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, it was a custom with my father and mother to seize the first fine days of returning spring, to make some short rural excursion round London with their children. They said it was to spend the money we had saved by not attending theatres and seeing sights so frequently as our neighbours. On the first of June, of a season of truly "ethereal mildness," a rare occurrence in England, it was arranged that we were to visit Windsor Castle, and a young cousin whom I had at Eton School. In the February of this year we had been as far as Enfield, my first distant excursion. I had seen many *hills*, and *ends*, and *gates*, and *thorpes*, and *hatches*, with the names of which I was familiar; and I had also seen Walthamstow, and Banstead Downs, and Cheshunt, and many lovely rural scenes and sights, such as I, a

London girl, had never imagined, or but feebly and imperfectly. I had fancied that I knew London and its environs, for many miles round, quite well, from my maps and the descriptions in my books, but I did not; and I think this little realizing journey, in which I could compare visible and tangible things with my rude and imperfect notions, was worth a year of study in geography. But the Windsor journey was the most important I had ever anticipated. I was to see the Castle, the King, and the Court, and the pictures;—and what damsel of my age knew better of Earl Surrey, and his Geraldine, and the royal poet, King James the I. of Scotland, not to mention Datchet Mead, and Herne's Oak, which I had seen in the play-house in the Merry Wives of Windsor, and was now, as I foolishly fancied, to see in real life. I had only one trial in prospect, my mother was to leave us at Windsor, to visit her favourite sister, Ellen, who was in very bad health;—I was not, however, of the age to fret long at evils still four days distant.

On the evening previous to our departure, I saw my mother preparing to go out at a rather unusual

hour for her, and as I fancied it was to purchase the straw bonnet for myself, which I usually got in spring, and which she had, I thought, unaccountably neglected, I requested leave to accompany her.—I liked to walk with my mother. She never wearied of my questions; now my sisters, although kind to me, had often matters of their own to attend to, when we were abroad. I took a small basket which my mother carried, about the contents of which I had some curiosity. It was very heavy; but I was too honourable to peep, and I thought it would be *childish* to inquire; for I was now nearly ten years old, and had become exceedingly sensitive on the subject of *childishness*.

We bent our steps towards a quarter of London with which I had no acquaintance, and threaded many dingy streets, and narrow cross alleys. We also passed several straw-hat shops, where hats and bonnets of the new summer shapes hung in tempting variety, neighboured by streamers of gay modish ribbons. I ventured at last to ask my mother what would be the cost of one of these small bonnets, with a green and white chequered ribbon. "Above a half-guinea, I daresay—do

you wish for one?—I see no need you have of a new bonnet—that of last season, which you now wear, is both neat and good. You have indeed, been very careful of it: I must own that."

"If I am to see the King," said I.—My mother smiled. "If the King be to see you, you mean," said she.—"But speak your wishes fairly, Jane—there is no need of half hints, and *finesse* between a mother, and her little daughter,—your parents deny you no pleasure which they can and ought to afford you."—"Then, mamma, I do not like to go to Windsor with this old bonnet—Jane Ford says it is shabby, and so does Emma Roberts."—"So it is, after all; to please Emma Roberts and Jane Ford I must give you this bonnet, and neither for the King nor yourself. Well, as it is unfair to take advantage of your carefulness, and as I usually give you a new bonnet about this season, you shall have it, or the price of it this night."

My mother now took the basket, for it had got heavy for me. I was a little surprised that a lady like my mother should carry anything of the kind, and I told her so.—"Why, Jane, if I had been walking up Bond Street, or along Piccadilly in a

morning, perhaps I might not have liked it, in dread of the Jane Fords, and Emma Robertses of my fashionable acquaintance; but it is convenient for me now, and not improper in this place. I could not spare a servant this evening, nor did I choose to hire a porter for so quiet an occasion,—and though you expect that the King is to look at your bonnet, I don't suppose that any one will notice so plain-dressed a person as myself, with a little girl, carrying a basket in Spittalsfield."

On a Saturday evening, there we were then—in the place where all the beautiful silks and satins are wove; and as there was no end to my wonders on this walk, I now wondered more than ever, how such poor-looking dirty people, as those that were going about on errands of Saturday, could manufacture those brilliant and delicate fabrics. We entered a close, dirty, dingy, mean-looking alley, and climbed a narrow, rotten, wooden stair. I said it was dirty, and snuffed up my nose; but my mother said it was not dirty for the situation.—"Not, to be sure," she said, "like the painted carpeted stairs you are accustomed to, but not dirty. It is time Jane that you were

learning how the great family of mankind act and live. You have been too long among ladies and gentlemen, surrounded by elegance and affluence; and you must learn what wealth, and luxury, and even cleanliness really mean, lest remaining ignorant of distress, you become callous and hard of heart."

We knocked at a door, and a girl about my own age opened it. My mother knew her, and spoke kindly to her; and the little girl looked so happy to see us, that for a few seconds she forgot her curtsy. Then it was very respectfully made,—and she ushered us on through a narrow dark passage to the door of an inner room.—"Little Bell," said my mother, "is, as you see, in her old, mended, and clean frock, as neat for her condition, as you in your white dress are for yours. Instead of marvelling and blaming—much less sneering at the sluttishness and dirt of poor families, I am often, Jane, lost in admiring surprise, when I look into their economy, and know their slender means, at the decency, neatness, and comfort to be found in their households.—Ah! Little Jane, if your mother had all her children to clothe, maintain,

and educate, on the slender precarious wages of a Spittalsfield weaver—what a miserable family of poor we should be! Where should I find the energy of resolution, the endurance in toil, of those poor respectable mothers of humble life?" My mother had never spoken to me so before. I think tears were in her eyes, yet she was smiling too. I ventured now to ask her whither we were going;—whom to see? "A poor, infirm, old woman, Jane; yet one of the happiest, and one of the best persons I know,—yes, though the inmate of a garret in Spittalsfield—the Widow Rushton."—How could I have been so stupid as not to have guessed this before! The name from infancy so familar to me, a household word with my elder sisters: even my father and brothers knew Widow Rushton,—and I remembered hearing them repeat many of her shrewd sayings, her *odd* things, and her jokes; for though we did not boast of her acquaintance before fine ladies and gentlemen, we often talked of her by ourselves, when we forgot them, and their flatteries and finery.

It seemed that our knock had not been heard; yet we knew the widow was within, and we heard

her voice as if talking to a child; the paralytic woman never left her apartment. We knocked louder, and were summoned forward. In an arm-chair, in a very small room, sat a venerable-looking woman, plainly and poorly, but neatly dressed as a widow of humble life. Her lame feet rested on a piece of old carpet of a pattern familiar to me at home; a small three-legged table was near her, on which lay her Bible; but there was no work—no spectacles—one lifeless arm was slung to her shoulder. Her faculties seemed not only entire, but her hale cheerful voice and intelligent benevolent expression of face, indicated even a youthful brightness and promptitude of spirit. The eyes alone—there was no spot or blemish in them—yet was the expression vague, dead,—not fixed, and yet statue-like. She received me very kindly, and asked my mother to place me beside her. My mother sat very near her; and as I thought it improper to attend to their whispered discourse about a marriage in our family, I amused myself in making a mental inventory of Dame Rushton's furniture. On a second survey, the apartment did not look uncomfortable, though my mother after-

wards told me the whole goods it contained were not worth ten pounds. There were a small camp bed, a deal table covered with green baize, a very small chest of drawers, on which were piled some volumes, and a straw work-box, and pincushion: —here too stood a tea-tray with a picture of the King, whom I was going to see, walking on Windsor Terrace with the Queen and his children; he looked a fresh young gentleman. Widow Rushton's mantle-shelf was well stored with the little things needed in the humblest housekeeping of a neat woman. In the window were four bough-pots with very sallow wall-flowers in sickly bloom, and long-legged spindly geraniums; and over all a bird's cage with the canary to which the widow had been talking on our entrance. "Hush you rogue," cried she, as the bird, emulous of the sounds of our voices, socially screamed forth its loudest notes,— "you will mope like a howlet for hours while we are alone, and scream out as soon as any friend enters the place.—Indeed, my dear," said she to my mother, "I begin to grudge Bobby's seeds,—one month with another, he costs me threepence a month, which, this year, I will tell you, is a serious

sum in poor Spittalsfield."—Threepence a month, a serious sum! I was astonished.

"No, no—you must not part with poor Bobby," said my mother: "though he be expensive, he is your opera-singer—your Ancient-music—your Oratorios,"—and my mother looked at me—"your lively companion in your dark hours;—we heard you talking gaily to him but now." My mother laid her hand kindly on the old woman's shoulder—I remembered they had been nurse and nursling many long years before I was born, so I did not wonder that though the widow generally addressed my mother as Mrs. Cooper, she now said, "God bless you Mary, for minding that lonely poor folks need some little cordial for the heart, as well as food for the stomach." I was not surprised at their familiar kindness, but I indeed wondered at their cheerful talk.

My mother said she was to be from home for six weeks, "with poor Ellen, who may yet, Hannah, go before you. I wished to bid you farewell before I went,"—and I was shocked when she added that if the widow died in her absence, my father was to take all charge—"If the change came," were

her words, and a smile brightened the old woman's features; and I was sure then she was not quite blind, when her eyes looked as if some great thing were promised her. Her words of acknowledgment were low and few; she spoke of the Goodness and Mercy that had followed her all her life long—she trusted that the close was not far off now, yet that, *laid aside*—useless as she felt herself—a burden on those she loved, she still tried to possess her soul in patience and cheerful resignation. She next talked to me, felt with her hands how tall I was; and then I again feared she was blind,—lame, and blind, and old, and poor, and yet happy!—it was a moral riddle for me, and I was glad to try to read it. She gave me a hoarded orange from her little table-drawer. I was rather big, I thought, for such presents; but it was given with such evident kindness that I received it with pleasure, and gave her back a small part peeled, that we might eat of it together. She now spoke gaily to me of my mother's childhood, and told me of her pranks; and I thought I had never known my own mother, or the world I was living in and passing through, holy or evil, before this

evening. She thanked my mother for bringing "Little Jane," that she might *see her* once in this world. "But, dear dame, do you see me?" said I, taking her hand with earnestness, and forgetting the rashness of the question, of which my mother's look reminded me. I thought I should have sunk with grief for the pain I inflicted, for there was momentary pain visible in the speaking face; but she soon smiled very cheerfully, and said, "My dear, there are many ways of seeing."

My mother was going about with keys in the little room, examining all the keepings of the blind inmate—the cupboard, and the old gardevin I once remembered in our garret,—to see what was wanting, and to deposit the contents of our basket. The little stores in the repositories were, it seemed, still almost untouched. "Indeed, Hannah," my mother said, "we don't thank you for being so very thrifty." The old dame smiled with something like humour and pride—"I have had easy nights, and little bodily pain; why *waste* on myself what this year many a poor thing so sadly wants," said she.

"That bottle of wine still untouched!"

"But, my dear, it is good to have it in the house, whatever may happen."—"Widow Rushton's comforts last like the Vicar of Wakefield's daughter's pocket-money," said my mother, smiling, to me. "It is not so long we can have you now, Hannah, and why grudge on yourself the glass of wine Mrs Harding so freely sends you; or, if you like beer better, have it. The tin tea-canister nearly full yet! and such a pile of white shillings! Indeed, Hannah, I fear you are growing a miser in your old days!" The old woman smiled outright now, and her light glassy eyes almost laughed too. She said, "Don't give little Miss Jane so bad an opinion of me." I was interested, but somewhat bewildered. For pity, for charity, for tears, for frankly voting away the price of my new bonnet, I was fully prepared; but here there was no place for excessive tenderness or benevolence:—there was much to admire and to reverence more and more deeply, as I came to understand the character and condition of the blind woman, and of the virtuous poor, but nothing whatever to pity. My mother, finding so much left in the stores, again chided her nurse—"Indeed, Hannah," said she, "this extreme par-

simony looks like distrust of Providence, or doubt of your friends."—"Nay, God forbid, my dear; have I ever absolutely wanted?—nay, nor shall I ever. Have I not been blessed in friends; and in the Friend that sticketh nearest. Whose trust should remain unshaken, if mine wavered?" and she shook her venerable head.

"Tell your story to little Jane, while I visit your neighbours, Bell's mother and Mrs. Brande.—Before taking her to see our good old King, I have brought her to see one of the happiest of his subjects; tell her your story."—"Ay, my dear; and do, bless you, call also on Martha Reding, or she will be jealous;" and she smiled again. "These are the kind neighbours that *do* for me," said the sagacious old woman, "not the less readily, my dear, that I am noticed, and their services to me acknowledged, by a lady like your mother. I cannot ask the young ladies, your sisters, to call on my Spittalsfield gossips; but your mother knows their trim, and can allow for them, and she makes them doubly attentive to me; yet they are worthy, honest, poor folks. I have got Mrs. Harding and her friends good, faithful servants from such fami-

lies;—and now for my story, my dear. Why, after all, it is nothing; but I shall tell it you, since your mother bids me.

"I was the daughter of a labourer in Essex—one of a large, poor family. I came to London for service, and found it; for Essex girls had a good name, and I was a stirring, likely lass then—I mean for work. I remained in service fifteen years, the last ten of which I spent in your grandmother's nursery—happy and easy years they were; and, indeed, my dear, I have since feared, that young women are only too easy and well off in the families of gentlefolks, and that this sometimes makes them discontented as poor men's wives; yet a home of one's own has many delights too to counterbalance its hardships.

"John Rushton and I were long acquainted; for, though bred a silk weaver, he was an Essex lad originally. We were not rash in marrying young—your grandmother helped to prevent that folly; we were both above thirty, and had put something beforehand to begin housekeeping. Wages were better then, and hours shorter for the poor weaver, though the ladies maybe did not buy

their gowns quite so often, nor so cheaply. This was the chamber of our first house, my dear, but we had a large kitchen below; and when your mother, then about your age, brought me that tea-tray, as a marriage-gift, on her first visit to Hannah's home, she saw these very same old things you are looking on now, nice things then. I believe, my dear, a poor couple, when they marry, and get a home of their own, are as proud of their room and their goods as e'er a lady and gentleman of their castle, their grounds, and their carriages; and why should they not? I am not seeing it now, but to me this small chamber, many a day, looked a gladsome place. Look round it my dear: it has held coffins and cradles, and heard the voice of bridal joy, and the groans of sore affliction; the weeping of a bereaved mother, and the feeble wail of an aged widow; but don't look sad, neither—for deep content is here:—the voice of thanksgiving for all,—for the grief as well as the joy has been breathed in the watches of the night from this poor chamber. Oh! if it were not so, what a hardened, heartless creature were I, if you knew all the blessings that in a long life I have tasted." This was

said in a low, earnest voice; and the Widow went on more lightly.—"I had five children; either the air of London, or some fatal constitutional taint, nipt them one by one. No one saw the other save the two younger; and they also drooped, pined, and went at last. I spent more on these infants than was proper for poor folks. Could I retain our little store, or any part of it untouched, and see them pine? But doctors did them little good. Could I have carried them to a purer air!—But, alas! I could not take them to Essex; and I have, indeed, in those days, grudged to see fine, healthy, young women rolling by in coaches, while I sank beneath the weight of the sickly baby which I carried abroad, both of us gasping for a mouthful of fresher air. My own health failed about this time; but I struggled to bear up. Your grandmother lent us a child's little carriage; and on Sundays, when John Rushton had leisure from toil, we alternately dragged our poor pale babies as far off as we could out of London into the country. Oh! how I sighed for the sweet breath of the meadows of Essex for my children; but they were taken to a yet purer air, and I was taught resignation.

"But ere this times were become hard with us; a low rate of wages brought on long, weary hours of work; and langour and sickness followed them, and unfitted for the increased exertion necessary to gain any thing like what my husband had once earned; still we were better off than many of our neighbours; for if our early store was gone, we had our household goods, and no debts." There was a pause in the narrative, and a low sigh was breathed ere it was resumed.

"John Rushton had shared much joy and grief with me; and now, together, we were to taste of poverty—ay, and of worse evils. Though it be quite true that drinking only aggravates every evil of the poor, He who made us, best can judge of the despair and strong temptation with which my poor man had to contend. He met with his fellows in public-houses to try to better themselves, and mend the times; and I fear they only made themselves worse, and the times no better; for, my dear, unless the Parliament could have bought all our silks, and paid us well for them, and taken more from us, what could the Parliament do for us? I never loved these meetings, but what could I say?—an

industrious and careful man, and a kind husband he had been many a day; and it was my part to bear and forbear now. When things were at the worst with us, it pleased God to afflict him with long and sore sickness, and mercifully to shew him his folly —indeed he had ever seen it, and bitterly lamented it too; but now he was a sincere penitent, and an amended life proved his contrition. He had laboured hard many a day to maintain me and my children; and now it was my turn to work for him, and to comfort him; and I was blessed in being able to do both. He died on that bed which we had purchased twenty years before, neither obliged to parish nor hospital, in peace and forgiveness with all mankind, and most of all with me. My friends, among whom, my dear, were your own kind relations, I know thought poor John's death a great blessing for their old Hannah, but they did not say so to her; and, though I could scarcely rejoice even in the release of my poor man from sorrow and suffering, yet I was not so impatient of the hand that afflicted as the affluent widow might have been. Still this was a trial—the greatest of my life. When, after a hard day's work, I returned

at night to my poor invalid, there was a kind of happiness in performing my loving service about him. There was a living being waiting and wearying for me to speak comfort to him, and a spark of fire in the little grate;—now all was become silent and desolate; and I thought, if it had been God's will, I would not have exchanged my hard day's work, and the anxious flutter of heart with which I went to hasten home then, for the chill torpor and void which weighed on me now. But, my dear, your mother bade me tell you my story, and I am telling you only my own feelings—very idle that; I will keep to the story now. In John's last illness, I had contracted some few debts, for the first time of my life. Sickness, alas! is craving, and capricious in its appetites; and how could I refuse any thing that my credit could procure for him? I sold the few silver tea-spoons, of which I had once been so proud, and a few other things; but I could not bring myself to part with our good Essex bedding, and these other little useful articles about you; for I had noticed, among my poor neighbours, that, when the room begins to be stripped of its furniture, all comfort, self-respect,

and well-doing, fast follow. Alas! pawnbrokers' money goes short way. By hard work, I got clear of all my encumbrances. Providence be blessed! I owed no man any thing when it pleased God to lay me aside." She tried here to lift the palsied arm, as if in devout thankfulness.

"The doctor said I had over-worked myself,—and one thing or another:—But, to be sure, after losing the use of the limbs, the poor eyes were of less value. I repined, I fear, too much; and coals of fire were heaped on my thankless head; for, from that day, when all became to my mind dark and desolate, I have never known want, nor the fear of want."

Words were breathing on the lips of the pious woman that were not intended for my ear. I cast down my eyes in reverence of her piety, unable to look on these sightless orbs whose power I felt as if they read my inmost heart. "But you are happy now?" I at last whispered.

"Indeed I am, my dear; nor, excepting under the immediate pressure of affliction, have I ever been much otherwise. At what the world would have called my worst times, I was not very unhap-

py; for neither gross vice nor absolute want were ever known within our threshold. While my husband lay bedrid, our silk trade was all knocked up; but, luckily, I could turn my hand to several things. I fear it was greediness of fine work, which paid me well, that cost me my eyes. From two families, who needed *charring*, I got constant employment; and there is much kindness ever going about in that world of middle life where the wants of the poor are understood.

"Saturday nights, like this same, wont to be a blessed, welcome time to me. My employers were not among the great; but those to whom I had done a faithful week's work, or a day's work, knew I had a bedrid husband to provide for, and often gave me what they could spare,—if not money, yet to me money's worth. No, I was never unhappy,—I had a pleased and grateful feeling, even working on often till far in Sunday morning, washing up our own few things, and cleaning our room after I came late home; and I hope the God, who has said that 'He delighteth more in mercy than in sacrifice,' forgives me this Sabbath-breach; and also if, instead of going to church in my old bonnet and

shoes—I might be too proud—I remained by the side of my poor sick man on my thrice-blessed day of rest, good thoughts not far from us, even in this lone chamber. No, indeed, my dear, I have never been to call unhappy; and, sitting here alone, with poor Bobby, (her canary-bird,) my sole living companion now, and thinking it all over and over, I feel as if the times that still lie nearest and dearest to my heart, and are more sweet than bitter in remembrance, are precisely those which, in passing, seemed my darkest days."

I was exceedingly interested in Hannah's story; I was proud also of her talking to me, blind as she was, and forgetful of my age, as if I were capable of feeling and understanding all that she said—which I think I did. I ventured to ask how she lived now. I thought my mother provided for her old nurse, and I loved Mamma the better for it. "My dear," said she, "I have ten pounds a-year; I teach the little girls in my neighbourhood a sort of reading, by a plan of my own; and they work with me too. I keep a kind of register for servant-girls for those of my friends who have a good opinion of my judgment, and believe me conscientious in my recom-

mendations; and, one way or other, with God's blessing, I have enough."

"And you, mother, give Hannah ten pounds," said I, heedlessly, as my mother entered the room. "Well, I am sure, I will never speak to you about a bonnet for myself again as long as I live."

"Indeed, Jane, I do not,—I could not afford to give Widow Rushton so much, highly as I esteem, well as I like her."

"Ah, my dear, you are still very young, and do not know how much it takes, in this big town, to educate, and set out in the world, so many young ladies and gentlemen as are of you, God bless you all," said the Widow, smiling. "All of you expecting, and reasonably too, to be maintained as becomes your birth and station. But I will tell you what your kind mother did for the blind woman: she went among her friends and mine, as soon as this last stroke fell on me, and raised this little fixed income, which she duly collects, at no small trouble to herself:—of what else she does for me, you have seen a little—I cannot tell you more."

"Oh, mamma," I whispered, if you would buy me no silk ball-frock, nor lace for it, next winter,

that would be good forty shillings or more to Widow Rushton, who has so very little after all."

The old woman, whose hearing was very quick, smiled. "But while you were so generous to the poor, blind woman, what, my dear, would become of my poor neighbours, the silk-weavers, that is, if every little miss gave up buying new dresses?—what of the still poorer lace-workers, far off in the country?"

"You perceive, Jane, there are reasons you did not dream of for buying silk frocks; besides, I like you to be properly dressed, and you cannot be that without new frocks."

"Then, ma'am, the bonnet," sighed I, determined to sacrifice something; and my mother nodded to me as if in approbation. My mother had now looked through all the Widow's keepings, and put every thing in order, and restored the three small keys on their ring, and taken renewed charge of things, that, after Widow Rushton's death, were to be sent as keepsakes to Essex,—her office of executrix in short was accepted once more. I have ever since liked to see poor people have keys and keepings, from the air of sober dignity with which these keys

were resumed. We now took leave, and the old friends shook hands kindly, almost fondly. They spoke again of my aunt Ellen's probable death; and the Widow said, "Give dear Ellen my love, twice-told!" and she blessed my mother, calling her "Mary," as if long intervening years had vanished from remembrance, and Ellen and Mary, and Essex Hannah, their nurse, were again inmates of their old garret nursery. My mother turned away her head,—I believe she was weeping at thoughts of her sister; and the Widow shook hands with me, and cheerfully said that I must come and see her again, and tell her about the King and Windsor.

After leaving her, we walked quickly for some time, and in silence; and then my mother talked to me of what made blind Hannah's room so cheerful, blind Hannah's spirit so light, there where she sat, in the shadow of perpetual darkness; and there was another thoughtful pause, till we again reached the straw-hat shop, when I inquired what a half-guinea would buy for Widow Rushton, looking with heroic indifference on the cottage-bonnet. "Perhaps a black stuff gown," I said;

" for that one she wears is sadly old and patched, though the clean white 'kerchief and apron set it out, and make it look respectable."

" No:—if you ask my advice, rather coals, Jane. She grudges firing on herself, now that all her poor neighbours have extinguished their fires, save just the spark when cooking; yet her poor palsied limbs feel chill even in summer."

I felt that I had not only never loved my mother better, but never been half as well acquainted with her as on our homeward walk; so freely did she talk with me, as to a rational creature before whom lay the lot of every human life,—a mixed fate of distress and duty, as well as of enjoyment, often producing each other, and sometimes strangely mingled. Mamma said we had talked of Widow Rushton long enough at this time; so she spoke of the print-shops and book-shops that we passed, and of Windsor Castle, and to-morrow; and so busy was she all the rest of the evening, that, I daresay, she forgot our visit, till at supper I told my father of the Widow's still uncorked bottle of sherry. I think my dear papa, generous, hospitable man as he was, who never grudged a glass of his good wine to any

body, was not ill-pleased to find his wife's old nurse not disposed to encroach on his liberality; and, as I was a shrewd little miss, I drew my own conclusions, and thought Widow Rushton not merely a pious, contented, blind old woman, but a very *clear-sighted*, sagacious one,—especially when my papa was so well pleased with her frugal management, that he added as much money to my half-guinea as bought a quantity of coals, which, I remember, cost us seventeen shillings; and which my eldest sister wrote for to our own coal-merchant, that "we might be sure," papa said, "our money was laid out to the best advantage." I would have been very happy to have walked back to the Widow's garret next day, to have seen that *wee* fire in that *wee, wee* grate of which I told my father, had I not been going to Windsor.

I think it was wise in my mother to have first shewed me virtuous, decent poverty, supported by active virtues, and cheered by pious hopes. In repulsive combination with low profligacy, with cruelty, selfishness, and hardness of heart, misery must, at my tender age, have repelled and disgusted me. But this was not our last visit to other

dwellings in Spittalsfield, where we found poverty in its darkest forms, struggling with its direst temptations, withering and blasting household affections, or changing them into furies. I learned to dread the pressure of great want for the lower classes, not merely because it deprives them of needful food and clothing, but as it almost necessarily hardens their hearts, brutalises their tempers, and rends asunder every bond of kindred charity: but these were after thoughts. On that night, my eldest sister pinned up my hair in papers, for the grand journey; and I went to bed a happy girl, sleeping, as it were, on the isthmus between the palace of Windsor and the garret of Spittalsfield.

THE ROYAL CHAPEL OF WINDSOR.

WHAT a happy day the 4th of June wont to be, WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL. Nature, in the yet untouched beauty of the early summer, combined with loyal feeling and old associations to make one universal day of flowers and festivals over all the land. Early June is indeed that true May to which the elder poets have sung so many exquisite hymns,—the season to which they have dedicated all their sweetest, most endearing words and names, —the "lovely," the "gentle" May; the "glad," the "green," the "joyous!" And never was there a softer, sunnier May morning—for I will abide by the calendar of the old poets—than that 4th of June, by our prosaic new-style, on which, before five o'clock, we drove off from my father's door for Windsor, that we might be in time to witness morning service performed in the Royal Chapel.

With me, all was one continuous dizzying whirl of joyous expectation, as we swept along the road, in the calm, fresh beauty of the newly-awakened Sabbath morning, till my wild spirits were awed into solemn reverence, as, pressing more closely to my mother's side, our family-party were ushered into the stately place of worship.

The service had not yet commenced, and, consequently, neither the King, his family, nor attendants had entered the Royal Chapel. But it was whispered that they might be looked for every moment now, as his Majesty was scrupulously punctual at prayers.

There was already a thin congregation assembled; a few strangers, drawn hither like ourselves by loyalty and curiosity; and, in compliment to the royal birth-day, a few of the inhabitants of Windsor and its environs; white-headed, ancient gentlemen-pensioners, old courtiers, and Poor knights, and superannuated generals, with a sprinkling of coeval ladies of quality. A soft, solemn strain of music rose, and I had time to collect my distracted thoughts, though, I am afraid, not long to retain them in any thing like the calmness or order suitable to the

scene; for again there was a little buzz and bustle, and then lords and ladies in waiting, and all sorts of officials, mostly old and plain, and all shabbily dressed,—the women muffled and huddled up as if dragged in haste or reluctantly from their beds,—shuffled forward with, I must say, very little of what I had preconceived of courtly dignity. A kind lady from Windsor, who was proud of being a living Court Almanack, whispered their names to us as they entered—Lord this, and Lady that, and the Bishop, and the General, &c. &c. A couple of stout, fresh, brisk-looking ladies, we were told, were the Princesses E—— and M——. Next the Queen! "What! that little old lady who looks so sharply about her,—she in the lavender dress?" "Yes, my dear; but speak lower." What a chill of disappointment!—and how they all, at least all the Court ladies, did stare, and outstare us, the privileged starers, the Cockney strangers! My mother drew back in her place, completely abashed; and I thus found my vista, between her elbow and my father's, suddenly closed upon me, and then I ventured to pull her down to breathe my manifold disappointments into her ear. "Hush, Jane!"

said one brother; and then he whispered, "Jane is like the man who thought kings and queens sat all day upon their thrones, with golden crowns on their heads, eating *blanc manger*." There ran now a muffled whisper of "the King! the King!" I had hitherto been all eye and ear; but now other feelings were awakened, and my heart fluttered like a bird. I got one transient glimpse, however; and, ah! how unlike the aged, dim-eyed man to the comely, portly gentleman of the Widow Rushton's tea-tray!—yet how much more striking!—and how much more did he resemble that venerable person herself than his own portrait of former days! The King like the blind Widow of Spittalsfield! How strange that seemed!—yet I felt it true.

I was the only little girl in the Chapel, among what might be called the spectators; and the eagerness of my looks, the vivacity of my restless motions, and my outstretched neck, made the polite strangers about us take compassion on my distress. A vista was again opened in front, and I now saw the King quite distinctly,—a venerable old man, hoary and furrowed,—no grandeur, no majesty, no assumption of princely dignity,—shading his dim

eyes with one hand, as he inwardly breathed his composing aspiration on entering this hallowed place. The other hand rested on the shoulder of the fair-haired child who stood by his side—his little granddaughter, the Princess Charlotte, whom he had led in his hand to the place of worship. The Princess!—the Princess *par excellence!* this was more than my hopes had bargained for. We afterwards learned that she had come the previous evening on a birth-day visit to her grandfather. I looked up to my mother, as if challenging her congratulation on this accession to our pleasures, and saw her gazing on the blooming child, with that touching expression of fond sadness with which mothers will sometimes transiently and involuntarily gaze on their own young daughters, even in moments of bright, unmingled happiness,—as if for their sakes they would question the dark future, and pray it to be gracious to the objects of their tenderest solicitude.

The shadow of that twofold night which soon afterwards surrounded the aged monarch, had not yet fallen on his spirit. When his granddaughter turned up the lessons or prayers, he looked attentively at them, and at her, though I believe both

objects were seen imperfectly. All this had passed in a few seconds; and there was now a deep hush, for the clergyman was in his place. The staring and whispering was for a minute suspended, the service commenced, and I saw the aged King bare-headed, his thin, trembling hands fervently clasped, his dim eyes uplifted, as it were to the place to which all his earnest thoughts were now directed, in the attitude of intense, absorbing devotion,—worship of a character more impressive than I had ever before seen, or even imagined. There then was the end of my dreams of royal splendour, for there stood the King of all the land—

"His staff his sceptre, his grey hairs his crown,"

trembling in presence of his God, breathing the general confession of sins, with the beings of a kindred and frail nature that stood around him, from the depths of a fervent, pious, and humble spirit. I heard him, as indeed did all that hushed assembly of worshippers, regularly pronouncing the responses, in a distinct, emphatic tone; and, for the first time of my life, I felt all the power and beauty of those pathetic and solemn words of supplication, and the rapturous, holy, yet subdued spirit of thanksgiving

embodied in the prayers of the Church. While the priest was reading the lesson, I could trace on the moving lips of the aged monarch the accompanying murmur of those divine words, so familiar to his memory, and so habitually present to his thoughts.

At the close of the customary prayers for the King, the solemn *Amen* was breathed throughout that part of the Chapel occupied by the strangers in the very extacy of a loyal, devout spirit; and returned, as it were, by the heart-struck Christian Prince, in tones of sympathy that made my pulses thrill. Then again came that soft and touching music, and the King and his granddaughter passed, like a vision, from our sight.

I am sorry to say that I cannot tell how the Queen, the Princesses, and the other ladies made their exit, for I saw none of them. Indeed we were deep in the excellent breakfast furnished us at the Castle Inn, before I wholly recalled my scattered senses. Even then they continually combined the image of Widow Rushton with that of George III.—the garret of the cheerfully pious poor old woman, with the Royal Chapel and the fervently devout aged King. And thus were my first indirect

lessons in the Christian faith, gleaned from places how different in the world's estimation!—yet all that was most hallowed, and beautiful, and impressive to a young mind was common to both. The same benignant and gracious spirit which illumined the darkness of the blind and lame widow, a secret, silent worshipper, in her solitary garret, sustained and animated the aged monarch, breathing his yet more earnest and impassioned devotions in that proud Chapel, in the midst of his formal or indifferent court.

One of my first observations was, "I am sure if the King knew our Widow Rushton, he would like to talk with her;" and my youngest brother said, "and perhaps he might give her a pension."—"I don't think he would," said my mother, "for he would quickly learn that she was rich enough already,—and will soon be as rich as himself." I guessed what my mother meant.

We saw my cousin Ned, and Eton College, and walked on the Terrace of Windsor, and inspected the pictured beauties of the gay court of Charles II. No one could tell me exactly about Surrey and

his Geraldine, nor yet of James I. and the beautiful Jane Beaufort, though, no doubt, many of these old grey heraldic-looking personages, whom I saw loitering around, could have done so. But I durst not be troublesome; so I chosé the finest Tower and the most verdant Court that I could find, and in my own fancy called them theirs—a scheme which I recommend to all poetical antiquarians of whatever age. On the whole, that journey to Windsor was a very gay and happy, as you see it has been a long-remembered one. My father left "his business face" at home, and I don't suppose he thought more of his "plagues," as we called them, during those three days, than I did of my old straw-bonnet.

As it was now time to clear the ROUND-TABLE for supper, Miss Jane Harding paused in her story: she said she had plenty more adventures to relate; but as hers were chiefly interesting to the girls of the audience, she must entreat that next evening should be devoted to the young gentlemen's amusement; so instead of a ballot for the

story-teller, she proposed that Mr. Dodsley should bring his magic-lantern, and that the tale should be THE THREE WESTMINSTER BOYS. This arrangement was only agreed to on the condition of Aunt Jane resuming her own history on a subsequent evening.

THE MAGIC LANTERN.—*Night First.*

THE THREE WESTMINSTER BOYS.

THE Magic Lantern, which belonged to Mr. Dodsley, was elegantly and ingeniously formed. He chose to exhibit its wonders himself; and story, and picture, aiding and illustrating each other, agreeably occupied several NIGHTS OF THE ROUND-TABLE.

"Peep, and tell us what you see, Charles," said the Reverend showman to our old friend Charles Herbert.—"An old building, forms, desks, a lofty large room, many boys and youths, and three apart and prominent."—"Let *me* look," cried Sophia,—"Westminster school, I declare! and those three boys! one very noble and graceful; the next dark, thoughtful, resolute, with keen eyes, and compressed lips; and the third—O! how gently, yet brightly he smiles, dear bashful boy, as his dark,

bold companion extends his arm, haranguing and pointing forward to some high distant object!—A picture is it,—a figure in state robes?—or is it to the insignia blasoned on that desk?—nay, I dare-say he wishes to be head-master."

"Have you all seen the three school-fellows?" asked Mr. Dodsley; "look at them well, for here they part on the path of life, never to meet again. Presto! change:—What see you now, Sophia?"—"Still the dark stern youth, and the gentle timid one:—they are older now, but I know them well. The noble-looking boy has disappeared. The scene seems chambers in the Temple. Through an open window I have a glimpse of gardens: piles of huge books are lying on tables, floor, and shelves. The dark resolute youth pores on a black-letter folio, and makes as it were notes or extracts. The other leans by the window, gazing over the gardens, a small open volume fluttering in his relaxed hand. Ha! I read on it 'Thomson's Seasons.'"—"Yes, Sophia, your gentle law-student is an idle rogue; he has been seduced into the 'primrose paths of poesy'—let us see the result;—meanwhile here is another picture."—"Beautiful! beautiful!" cried

the admiring girl, "A large ship!"—"An outward bound Indiaman," said Mr. Dodsley.—"All her sails set," continued Sophia. "How proudly, how stately she ploughs her way, breasting the waters like a swan. And there, on her deck, that noble gentleman, the third Westminster boy,—and yet not he, —walking so proudly as if in accordance with the majestic motion of the brave ship. I am glad to meet him again:—and all those military attendants—the gaudily dressed musical band,—the plumed officers, —and he the centre of all! What a great man he must be, and how well honour becomes him!"

"Shall we follow his progress to the East, or return to yonder gloomy, sombre chamber in the Temple?"—"Both," cried several young eager voices; "we must trace them all,—all the three school-fellows."

The next view was of a large Oriental city, its architectural splendour and magnificence of outline glittering in the dazzling, but uncertain brilliance of the morning sun; domes and minarets, Mahomedan mosques, and Indian pagodas, fountains, and palaces, and stately dwellings, sparkling in the out-pouring of the increasing flood of intense and

golden light; over this scene were grouped and scattered Mussulmans, Arab warriors, Brahmins and Sepoys,—all in diversified and picturesque costumes,—ornamented palanquins, European officers richly dressed, and mounted on beautiful horses; elephants prancing in their splendid trappings; females and children, their dark skins and silky hair, and large black eyes, contrasting with their white and gaudily spangled dresses; dancing girls, and marabouts,—all, in short, that could compose a picture of Oriental beauty and splendour; and that princely man, now of middle-age, on the large white elephant, still the centre of all.

The scene changed slightly, and discovered the interior of the magnificent saloon of a residence that appeared royal, where the noble figure, whom Sophia still rightly declared the third boy of Westminster school, received, in Oriental state, homage, paid with the lowliest prostrations of the East, from a long train of nawaubs, rajahs, and envoys, illustrious captives or princely tributaries, whom his policy or his prowess had subdued to the dominion of England. Royal and magnificent was

all about him; his aspect grave, dignified, and elate, his step and air majestic; yet the shadow of deep, anxious thought, of heart-struck care, at times darkened his embrowned visage. Whence then had fled the generous, sunny, open smile, that lightened the grey walls of Westminster school?—the noble, free expression of the younger man, who so proudly trode the deck of the outward bound Indiaman?

"Alas! what change!" said Sophia; "I almost dread, yet long to follow him farther."

Dim, troubled, misty scenes next flitted by; battles hid in smoke and obscurity; the wide plain of Hindostan flooded or desolate,—naked huddled millions,—signs of disaster, famine, and misery; and in the foreground still that princely man, his features ploughed with care, knitting his brows in fierce anger and disdain, stamping on the ground, while his eastern slaves cowered around him, as he hastily perused letters and despatches, his English secretary, attendants, and aids-de-camp standing back, anxiously scanning his looks, and reading his troubled mind in his working and eloquent features.

This scene passed, and he was next seen in an English ship, more stately if possible than the former vessel, freighted with all the rich and rare productions of the East; but the bright look had waxed dim, the buoyant step of the outward-bound voyager was now heavy and slow. Anon, and he lay reclined on a couch on the deck, under a silken and gold awning. A physician felt his pulse; black servants in splendid costumes fanned him; others approached with profound salams, bearing perfumes, and offering service, as they might have done to a divinity; indifferent to all, his eye remained rivetted on one paper, on a few cabalistic words, which, like the damned blood-spot on the hand of Lady Macbeth, would not out, could not sweeten.

"Turn we again to England," said Mr. Dodsley, shifting the scene, "to our stern, ambitious, iron-minded man, of invincible purpose, of unconquerable perseverance, and, let me add, of strong intellect, and yet stronger ambition:—there you see him, the slough of the Temple cast, in the King's Bench, in the Court of Chancery, in the Commons House of Parliament, every energy of his mind in

perpetual activity, already surrounded by satellites, the ministers or slaves of his will, subdued by that mighty and resistless will to its own purposes of selfish aggrandizement, of intrigue and political ambition, and, it may occasionally be, of pure patriotism. And now every obstacle overcome, undermined, or boldly trampled under foot, see him make one grand spring to reach the height at which every act of his life has aimed; while all men, the stronger as well as the feebler spirits, give way to his resistless progress, or cheer him on to the spot where lie the coveted rich robes, the patents, and the purses, and by these the mighty insignia of the Lord High Chancellor of England."

"I begin to long for a glimpse of our gentle boy now," said Sophia, "dreaming over his Thomson's Seasons. Has he been borne down by the torrent which has carried his bold and daring companion so high and far?—Our gentle interesting boy!—has he been cast away like a weed, or has he cast away himself?"—"You shall judge," said Mr. Dodsley,—"Here is our lost one——" And there he was, the very boy, developed in the thin, melancholy, wo-worn man, sitting lonely on a

tombstone, under the elms of a country churchyard.—"He is curate of that church," said Sophia; "and I daresay he has lost his wife or his child. How refined and how expressive are his faded features; a look of meek resignation, stealing over the traces of some deep mysterious affliction."

"He never was in orders, nor yet had wife or child, my sprightly guesser," said Mr. Dodsley. "Mental blight, dark and fearful trial, and the utter desolation of worldly prospects, have all passed over him; but he is, as you see, better now,—there is even an occasional flash of humour kindling over those placid features,—of which, however, gentle kindness, deep, holy submission, is the fixed and habitual expression."

"It makes my heart ache to see him so far thrown out," said Sophia; "for even at Westminster I liked him best."—"He was my boy too," cried Fanny. This was not quite correct, for Sophia had expressed strong sympathy with the "noble boy," as she called him, and great admiration of the Oriental Vice-king; but Mr. Dodsley accepted her own interpretation of her altered feelings, and said

"He was 'a stricken deer that left the herd'—nor was he free from blame; but his dark hour is past. Shall we follow him to his humble abode, not far from those churchyard elms, or return to those scenes of splendour, of grandeur, of substantial wealth, of real power, in which his early compeers preside, guiding or wielding the energies and the destinies of nations?"

"Follow him, sir," said Sophia; and the boys, though anxious for more stirring pictures of life, politely yielded to her wish. The quickly shifting scenes exhibited a dull, dingy, and even mean-looking house, in the centre of a small fifth-rate market town, and again a low-roofed parlour in that house, very plainly furnished with things neither fine nor new, and still less fashionable. Here sat an elderly, but comely gentlewoman knitting; and before her stood a plain tea equipage, waiting, as the next scene shewed, the arrival of the loiterer under the churchyard elms, whom she seemed to welcome with the placid smile of long-tried affection. This scene looked brighter than the former; the old window curtain was let down, the old sofa wheeled in, the tea-kettle was steaming,—and it was singing

also, no doubt, if pictures could give out sounds; the shadows of a blazing fire of wood were dancing and quivering on walls and roof, and shining on all the polished surfaces of the furniture; and a couple of hares at a touch were seen in another scene, leaping from a box. They gamboled and wheeled on the well-brushed carpet, their benevolent master and protector looking on their sports, and caracoles, and gambades, with pleased, affectionate, and even interested eyes.

"How lively those scenes—they are nature itself, Mr. Dodsley," said Miss Jane Harding.—"Your magic lantern is the finest mimic representation of life I ever saw."

"I know whereabouts we are now," cried Sophia, in a low, earnest, yet delighted tone of voice. "Olney! Cowper! Mrs. Unwin!—Ah! sulky Tiney, and Mistress Bess the vaulter!"—"Let me see, let me see," cried the younger children; and Sophia had now a much stronger object of interest than the pictured scene, which she left to Fanny and Charles, and the other little ones.

"But the studious, thoughtful youth, who pored over the folio in the Temple," she cried,—"the

dark-browed, stern man of the Chancery Court, Cowper's early friend—who was he?"

"Edward Thurlow, Lord High Chancellor of England."—"And that other boy—the noble boy—the Westminster scholar?" said Sophia.

"Warren Hastings, Governor-General of India. These three youths started from the same point.—In birth, Cowper was certainly the most distinguished of the three;—of their respective talents we will not now speak—great men they all were—good men too, let us hope. The lot cast was into the lap. All started for the prize:—by routes how different did each gain the appointed place where all human travellers meet! What then were their gains?—which was happiest in his course of life?—But we must follow them farther; true is the Italian proverb, which says that no man can be pronounced happy till he is dead! Which of the three Westminster boys became the best man? Which most nobly fulfilled his duties to his God, his country, and his kind? Which—now that they all are gone to their reward—enjoys the widest, the purest, the highest fame? Which remains the best model to the youth of England?—Not one of the three

faultless, without doubt; but which of these three great men comes nearest the mark, at which you, my boys, would aim?"

"I suppose Lord Thurlow was Chancellor before Henry VII.'s time," said Fanny Herbert; and Charles added in explanation, "*Our* history of England only begins then, so we don't know Lord Thurlow. Sir Thomas More, you remember, Fanny?—he was a merry, kind man that Chancellor."

"Your history goes back to a decently remote period," said Mr. Dodsley, smiling at the observation of the young historians. "Lord Thurlow held this high office at a very recent date, in the reign of George III. at the same time that Mr. Hastings exercised the mighty government of the East, and Mr. Cowper lived in neglect, and obscurity, composing his poetry."

"If we were to judge by our little audience," said Mrs. Herbert, "one of your questions, nay, perhaps two, are already answered. The modest poet, living apart in that nameless obscurity, already enjoys not only a higher, but a more universal fame than either of his youthful compeers. All our good little folks here know him, less or

more, in his daily life, as well as in his beautiful verse; they read him, and quote him, and love him, and, by daily draughts from his stores of wisdom and of love, nourish their moral and intellectual nature to a strength and stature it might never otherwise have attained."

"I fear you are a confirmed Cowperite," said Miss Jane Harding, to her sister. "But what say you, young gentlemen?"

"Hastings for me!" cried Mr. Frank Consadine, the Irish youth. "Hastings, prince and conqueror!" "And for me the woolsack," cried George Herbert. "I would rather, I think, just now, but I may change my mind, be High Chancellor of England, than England's Sovereign: to the one a prince is born, the other a *man* must achieve."

"If," said Norman Gordon, the Scottish youth, "one could be an Eastern Vice-king, or English Chancellor, and author of the Task at the same time, one would be at no loss to decide;" and he half-laughed at the profound silliness of his own cautious conclusion.

"You would unite impossibilities, Mr. Norman," said the curate. "Cowper's poetry required not only

an original cast or bias of mind, but a preparatory course of life, and a mental discipline quite peculiar —very different, indeed, from that of a lawyer and politician, or Eastern legislator and conqueror. We must take our three school-boys and men exactly as we find them; and determine the claims, and estimate the happiness of each on his own merits, nor think of what might have been."

The younger children liked pictures better than discussion, so the whole group solicited Mr. Dodsley to proceed with his exhibition, which he did, still adhering to the original idea.

"To afford you wider grounds for forming your opinions, my little friends, you shall see each of our heroes by his own fireside, and also in more active and distinguished scenes. This first, is the Lord's House of Parliament, solemn and antique, with its Gothic, tag-rag decorations.

"It is the day of a trial. These are the peers of Britain,—yonder the judges and the prelates of the land,—there some of the young princes of the blood royal, honoured in being created members of this House.—Taken all in all, the scene before you represents the most august tribunal in the world;

and before that tribunal is arraigned Warren Hastings—the victim of a triumphant faction—the object of much ignorant clamour, and of popular hatred, which one can yet hardly condemn, as it sprung from the best feelings of humanity. You see the long perspective of counsel, and clerks, and ushers, and reporters. That is Burke, who, with the lightnings of his eloquence, blights and withers the once flourishing and princely Hastings. And there stands Sheridan ready to pounce on his victim,—to hold up the proud-minded Vice-king to the abhorrence and execration of the world, as a monster of rapacity, cruelty, and tyranny,—swollen with wealth and bloated with crime, the desolator of the fairest portion of the East,—the wholesale, cold-blooded murderer of millions of Asiatics.

"The partisan orator may be half-conscious of the falsehood of many of his representations, and entirely so of their artificial gloss and high-colouring, but candour and truth are not the object of the party man; he vehemently proceeds in his statements,—boldly makes his charges, and eloquently supports them.

"We shall now presume the House adjourned,

and follow Hastings to his retirement. Where now, Sophia, is the gay Westminster boy,—the gallant, ambitious, high-minded statesman and soldier of the East? Can you trace him in that sallow, drooping, arraigned criminal, whose spirit is chafed almost to madness. In public he folds up his arms in self-supporting disdain;—he tries to smooth his care-worn brow, and to teach his quivering lip to curl in contempt of his open accusers, and more rancorous secret enemies. But, alas! contempt, and disdain of our fellow-men are not calm, much less are they happy feelings. The persecuted, if not yet degraded man, is sick at his very soul;—his heart is bursting with the indignant anguish which will break it at last. There may have been, and in this still hour of self-communion conscience so whispers, things faulty and blame-worthy in his bold and illustrious career. Nor is he free of guilt; for his station was one of great difficulty, and loaded with responsibility which might make even the strongest and best-hearted man tremble. Images of long-acted, painful scenes rise before him in his solitude; actions justified, in their passing, by the plea of a strong necessity, which he dislikes and

dreads to think of now. And here, the world shut out, surrounded as he is with all the wealth and luxury of the Eastern and Western hemispheres, the hootings of the London rabble, and the hissings of the adder-tongues of his enemies, still ring in his ears; and to these envenomed sounds conscience in his own bosom returns a faint, yet an undying echo. Perhaps he may wish, in this anguished hour, that his lot, though less splendid, had been more safe.

"To beguile an hour of care he takes up a volume of the poetry of his old school-fellow, the lost William Cowper. He has little leisure for literature, but a lingering taste remains for what engrossed so many of the happy hours of happier days. He turns up one passage after another; and the map and history of Cowper's life lie before him. Are his feelings those of pity or of envy?—probably they are a strangely entangled mixture of both. His eye is riveted on a passage in the poem of Expostulation; he reads on and on, and, as if spell-urged, pronounces aloud,

> 'Hast thou, though suckled at fair Freedom's breast,
> Exported slav'ry to the conquered East?

Pulled down the tyrants India served with dread,
And raised thyself a greater in their stead?
Gone thither armed and hungry, returned full,
Fed from the richest veins of the Mogul,
A despot big with power, obtained by wealth,
And that obtained by rapine and by stealth?'

Hastings can read no farther. This passage could not, did not apply to himself—in his proud integrity of heart he felt assured of this. The opinions too were those of ignorance—what could Cowper know of the East?—and then he wonders at the latitude of discussion, and the licentiousness of the press in England. He dips again,—his fortune may be better this time: for in these rich volumes he perceives that there is much poetic beauty. He is more fortunate now, for he opens at the admired description of the coming in of the Post; how fine an opening—and he read aloud

'Hark! 'tis the twanging horn * * *
* * * * * * * *
But oh! the important budget! ushered in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings?—have our troops awaked?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave?
Is INDIA FREE? and does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still?'——

"The heart-struck but fascinated reader proceeds on, in spite of himself, till he finishes the finest passages of the poem,—those which unveil the habits and amiable character of his early friend. If there were some stir and bitterness in his spirit on the first perusal of offensive strictures, that is past now:—he lays down the book with a quiet sigh; and, striving to fix his mind on all that has been most brilliant in his fortunes, can only remember how many years have elapsed since he was a Westminster school-boy; and that both he and William Cowper have long since passed the meridian of life.

"Are you not yet tired, Miss Fanny, of gazing on that gorgeous bed-chamber," said the curate; "the bed of carved ivory and gold, the silken draperies, and couches of crimson and gold curiously worked; the silver-framed mirrors, the rich porcelain vases and foot-baths; the splendid toilette, with its jewelled ornaments; the ivory and ebony cabinets, richly inlaid with gold, and in the highest style of Eastern decoration, exhibiting groups exquisitely executed; religious processions, festivals, marriages, in short a series of gorgeous pictures of Eastern

manners. Those caskets on the toilette contain some of the rarest jewels of the East. That large emerald is to be sent to-morrow morning to a certain lady of questionable fame, but of great influence; for the proud Hastings must stoop to make friends, at this crisis, by arts he would once have spurned, and still loathes. That gold bed, preserved with such care in his own chamber, is intended for a gift or tribute to the Queen of England."

The children were not yet satisfied with gazing; and Mrs. Herbert said, "I fear, my dears, if thus fascinated by grandeur, you will ill bear a transition to the dull, low-roofed parlour at Olney." "No: were it a dungeon with such inmates," cried Sophia, resolutely turning from the beautiful picture of the interior of Mr. Hastings' bed-chamber.—"Well said, Sophia, if you stand to it," returned her mother—"But I see Charles and Mr. Norman long for another peep of those Eastern weapons suspended over the chimney."—"That most beautiful scimitar, the handle studded and blazing with jewels!" cried the peeping boy,—"and those exquisite pistols! how was it possible to paint them so truly? And that—Damascus blade, did you call it?"

"Lest the transition to sad, sombre, Puritanic Olney, be too violent, we will, first, if you please, visit the Lord Chancellor," said Mr. Dodsley.—"Presto! There he is at the head of the state council-board; these are his colleagues—his party friends, his rivals, his flatterers, his underminers, ranged on each side of him, and he knows them all well; they may injure but they cannot deceive him. He looks grim, and stern, and unhealthy. Even now there is spasm upon him; a youth of hard sedentary study, a manhood of incessant labour, and, latterly, a weight of public and of private cares, have weighed and broken down Lord Thurlow. He looks old before his time. His temper, even his friends allow, has become rugged, boisterous, arrogant,—almost brutal. But they know not the secret pangs that torture him, or they might bear with patience, or pardon with gentleness, those fierce ebullitions of rage that will not acknowledge sickness nor infirmity. Even in the death-gripe he will clutch those magic seals. But now he presides at that Board where the subject of discussion is the glory and safety of the empire,—the weal or wo of millions yet unborn. If

the feeling of bodily langour for an instant overpower his intellectual energies, alarmed ambition stings his mind into preternatural strength, for he penetrates the arts of a wily rival, who, affecting to acquiesce in his measures, secretly labours to thwart them, and to undermine him in the favour and confidence of his sovereign. He puts forth all his strength, tramples the reptile in the dust, and seats himself at the head of empire more firmly and securely than ever. Is he happy now?—He thinks he should be so, but he thinks little of it; he has leisure for nothing, heart for nothing, memory for nothing, save his high function, and the arts necessary to maintain himself in it. He has no time, and indeed no wish to ascertain his own state either of body or mind. If he has no leisure to attend to his health, how can he be supposed to have time for self-examination, or for serious thought. He once had many schemes, the growth of his strong and even enlarged mind, for the welfare of the State, and the happiness of his old private friends,—but they must be delayed; and now he loses even the wish for their accomplishment; his heart, never either very kind or

soft, has become narrowed as well as callous; his temper waxes more and more hard, and gloomy, and repulsive; his private friends fall off, disgusted by his neglect and surly, arrogant haughtiness. They have no longer any common sympathies with Edward, Lord Thurlow. He stalks through his magnificent house alone; he writes, erases, burns, knits his brows over communications and despatches which offend him,—and many things offend him,—he sits up half the night plunged in business; the surgeon who of late sleeps in his house administers a sleeping draught, and he will try to obtain a few hours of troubled repose. Had pride allowed him he could almost have addressed the obsequious medical man in the well-remembered words of Macbeth,

'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?'

Many, many years ago, he had seen Garrick play that character and many others, when William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, was his companion to Drury-lane. They had spouted the favourite passages together fifty times, after returning home to sup, now in Cowper's chambers, now in Thurlow's. Of rhetoric and declamation Edward Thurlow was ever an admirer; young

Cowper relished more the intense passion, or the deep pathos of the scene.

"The memory of his old fellow-student and companion had been revived on this night by the arrival of a volume, just published, of Cowper's poetry. With a feeling bordering on contempt, Lord Thurlow threw it from him unopened.—Now another scene of our magic glass, and behold the High Chancellor lays his throbbing but ever clear head on a downy pillow, and sets his alarum-watch to an early hour; for, sick or well, he must be at Windsor by ten to-morrow. He, however, leaves orders, that at whatever hour his private secretary, who is waiting the issue of an important debate in the House of Commons, shall return, he be admitted to him,—Lord Thurlow has an impression, that, though he may stretch his limbs on that bed of state, sleep will not visit him till he learn the fortune of the day—hears how the vote has gone. It was a debate on the African slave-trade. He first inquired the vote—it was favourable. He glanced over the reports of the leading speeches:—the vote was his,—but the feeling, the spirit of the night was strongly against him. There was the speech of

Charles Fox; and he had quoted Cowper!—a beautiful apostrophe to Freedom, cheered by all the members on both sides of the House, forced to admire, vote afterwards as they might.

"Lord Thurlow now sets himself to sleep in good earnest, and his strong will is omnipotent even here. But over the empire of dreams, the High Chancellor had no power,—Fancy is not a ward of Chancery. His visions were gloomy and distempered. His youth, his manhood, his present life, are all fantastically but vividly blended. Sometimes the spirit that haunts him is the Prince of Wales, then it becomes Charles Fox, and anon it changes to William Cowper; and again back to Fox. But his hour comes, the alarum wakes him, and he is almost glad of the relief.

"Would you choose to see the Chancellor's dressing-room, Fanny, and his ante-chamber, and the persons met in levee there, thus early, in a chill, foggy, winter's morning?" Fanny chose to do so.

And there was seen the plain chamber of the English Minister, lights burning dimly in the cold, heavy air,—a fire choked with smoke.

"Ah, poor old gentleman," cried Fanny, "there

he is, so cold, I am sure, and so very cross he looks, —the poor servant that shaves him looks so terribly frightened. Well, considering how late he was of getting to bed, and all, I don't think, brother George, it is very pleasant to be a High Chancellor—at least in winter; particularly when the King wishes to see him so early at Windsor, to scold him perhaps."

"O, you silly child," said her sister.

"Not so silly, Miss Sophia," said the Curate. "To be sure, there is no great hardship visible here, still I could have wished the High Chancellor a longer and sounder sleep; and it is very wise, Fanny, to learn young, 'that all is not gold which glisters.' But now we shall suppose the Chancellor shaved and booted, his hasty cup of coffee swallowed—as the Jews did the Passover—standing, his loins girt; for he too is bound for the wilderness. In short, he detests Windsor interviews. A secretary bears his portfolio; his carriage is at the door; he hurries through the circle of adulators, solicitors of his patronage, understrappers of all kinds, that wait his appearance,—the whole herd hateful to him, and he to them; and he is not a

man of glozing words or feigning courtesy. No man in England can say '*No*' more gruffly or decidedly. A few indispensable words uttered, he hurries on. Near the door you note a young clergyman, his fine features 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;' his profile strikingly resembles that of William Cowper, and Lord Thurlow recalls his dream, and Charles Fox's quotation; and, with his old accurate Temple habits, takes the portfolio himself, and directs his secretary to return and bring him a volume 'lying on the third shelf of a certain cabinet in his business-room, between a pamphlet on India affairs, and that something about Lord George Gordon.' He now perfectly recollected—for his memory was tenacious of every thing—that Cowper had lost his paltry sort of appointment,—had gone deranged,—was always *swainish*,—and now piped in some rural shades or other, sunk into *nobody*, with, probably, not political interest sufficient to influence the election of the neighbouring borough-reeve. There had been a degree of impertinence in sending such a book to him; or it was, at least, an act of silliness, and shewed small knowledge of life. But Fox had quoted

it; so once beyond the smoke of London, Thurlow turns over the leaves. The carriage rolls on, post-haste, to the audience of Majesty; but habit has enabled the High Chancellor to read even in the most rapid whirling motion. He dips at random in search of Fox's passage, and stumbles on that splendid one—'All flesh is grass.' 'Cowper should have been in the church,' thought he; 'a dignified churchman he is unfit for, but he might have made a tolerable parish priest, if he would steer clear of Methodistical nonsense.'—He dips again—'One sheltered hare;' 'whining stuff! or is he mad still?' His eye falls on that passage beginning—'How various his employments whom the world calls idle;' and he reads on, not with the natural feelings of Hastings, but yet not wholly unmoved, till he get to the words, 'Sipping calm the fragrant lymph which neatly she prepares,' when, throwing down the book, the man, strong in the spirit of this world's wisdom, mutters to himself, 'piperly trash!—and is it this Charles Fox quotes? The devil quotes Scripture for his use, and Fox would quote the devil for his.' Lord Thurlow then plunges into

that red portfolio which engrosses so much of his time—so much of his soul.

"And now 'the proud keep of Windsor' rises on the ambitious, and prosperous, and proud statesman:—he smooths his brow; his sovereign welcomes him graciously; his audience passes off well; he hastens back to London, where a thousand affairs await to occupy and torture though they cannot distract him. He snatches a morsel of cold meat; swallows a glass of wine; and off to the House of Peers, to be baited for six long hours by the bulldogs of Opposition."

"And what has the poor gentleman for all this?" said little Fanny. "I am sure he has hard work of it."

"How idly you do talk, Fanny; is he not Lord Chancellor of England?" cried her sister.

"And fills high—I may say, the highest place; has immense patronage; is the maker of bishops, and deans, and judges, and every thing," said George.

"And has immense revenues," added the Curate; "estates, mansions,—all that money can command."

"Poor old gentleman," said Fanny, "I am glad he has also that wool-sack to rest himself on, for I am sure he must be sadly tired and worried."

"Turn we to Olney—to that dwelling in the very heart of that shabby, but now honoured town—to Cowper's abode;—no poet's fabled retirement, embowered in sylvan solitudes, by wild wandering brook or stately river's brink, skirted with hanging woods, or vine-clad steeps, or towering mountains.—Here is the parlour."—"But pray stop, sir," cried Sophia, "that dull house had its pleasant accessories; have you forgot the greenhouse, the plants, the goldfinches; that pleasant window, looking over the neighbour's orchard?—and what so beautiful as an orchard, when the white plum-blossom has come full out, and the pink apple flowers are just budding?"

"And Beau, and Tiney," cried Fanny.

"I have forgot none of these things, my dears, said Mr. Dodsley. "Only I fear that to see them, as Cowper saw them, we must have a poet's glass; an instrument of higher powers than a Claude Lorraine glass, and clothing every object with softer, or warmer, or sunnier hues than even that

pretty toy ;—where could that be bought, Fanny?"

"Indeed, sir, I don't know," said Fanny.

"We may borrow one for a day, or a few hours or so," said Sophia, smiling intelligently.

"It is but fair to use Mr. Cowper's glass in viewing his own pictures,—and Mrs. Unwin's spectacles, in judging of her domestic comforts," said the Curate. "There is the parlour ;—it looks doubly snug to-night. Now you are to recollect, ladies and gentlemen, that this scene passes on a night when Mr. Hastings' *trial* is proceeding ; and while Lord Thurlow is busy and distracted in his bureau. Tea is over—the hares are asleep on the rug.—Beau, the spaniel, lies in the bosom of Bess, the maukin. On the table lie some volumes of voyages, which Mrs. Hill has this day sent from London to Mr. Cowper, with a few rare, West India seeds for his greenhouse, as he calls it. There is a kind but short letter from her husband, Cowper's old friend—for he too, is a busy man in the courts, though not Lord Chancellor—and there is a polite note from herself. There has also been a letter from Mr. Unwin this evening, a very kind one, filial and confidential. Mr. Cowper's cumbrous

writing apparatus is on the table, for he has not yet got his neat, handy, writing-desk from Lady Hesketh. His former writing-table had become crazy, and paralytic in its old limbs; but to-night, he has, by a happy thought of Mrs. Unwin, got that forgotten card-table lugged down from the lumber garret, and he shakes it, finds it steady, and rejoices over it. And now the fire is trimmed for the evening; the candles are snuffed; they shew a print of Mr. Newton, and a few prints of other rather ugly, grim-looking, evangelical ministers, and black profile shades of some of Mrs. Unwin's friends. Yet all looks comfortable and feels pleasant to the inmates—for this is their home. O! that magic, transfiguring word! but this home is indeed a peaceful and a happy one.

"Mr. Cowper relates to his companion the events of his long morning ramble,—a rambling narrative; simple, descriptive, somewhat pathetic too, nor unrelieved by a few delicate touches of Cowper's peculiar humour. And she listens all benevolent smiles to his ventures, happed in meadow and mire—'o'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers' banks;' and, in her turn, tells him of two poor

persons distressed in mind, and pinched in circumstances, who had called at their house; and mentions what she had done for them, and consults what farther deed of mercy or charity she and her friend may jointly accomplish before that day closed. And now Sam, Mr. Cowper's excellent and attached servant, or rather humble friend, who in adversity had cleaved to him, enters the room. Sam knew nothing of London life, or London wages, or official bribes, or perquisites; but I should like to know if ever Lord Thurlow had such a servant as Mr. Cowper's Sam; for this is no inconsiderable item in a man's domestic happiness. And unless we know all these little matters, how can we pronounce a true deliverance."

"We may guess, that honest Sam and his qualities would have been of little utility, and of small value to Edward, Lord Thurlow, any way," said Mrs. Herbert; "and so throw the attached servant out of his scale altogether."

"I fear so:—well, Sam civilly, but rather formally, neither like a footman of parts nor of figure, mentions that John Cox, the parish clerk of All Saints' Parish, Northampton, waits in the kitchen,

for those obituary verses engrossed with the annual bill of mortality, which Mr. Cowper had for some years furnished on his solicitation.

"'Ay, Sam,—say I will be ready for him in a few minutes, and give the poor man a cup of beer,' said the courteous poet. 'I must first read the verses to you, Mary,' continued he, as Sam left the parlour; 'you are my critic, my Sam Johnson, and Monthly Reviewer:'—and he reads those fine verses beginning, 'He who sits from day to day.'

"'I like them, Mr. Cowper,' said his calm friend; and that was praise enough.—John Cox was ushered in, brushed his eye hastily over the paper, scraped with his foot, and said he daredtosay these lines might do well enough. The gentleman he employed before was so learned, no one in the parish understood him. And Cowper smiles, and says, 'If the verses please, and are not found too learned, he hopes Mr. Cox will employ him again.'

"And now the postboy's horn is heard, and Sam hies forth. Mr. Cowper is not rich enough to buy newspapers, but his friends don't forget him, nor his tastes. Whenever any thing likely to in-

terest his feelings occurs in the busy world, some kind friend addresses a paper to Olney. Thus he keeps pace with the world, though remote from its stir and contamination. He reads aloud another portion of the trial of Hastings, most reluctant as friend and as Christian to believe his old school-fellow the guilty blood-dyed oppressor that he is here described. He reads the heads of a bill brought in by the Lord Chancellor to change, to extend rather, the criminal code of the country; and says, passionately, 'Will they never try preventive means? There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart, it doth not feel for man.' He skims the motley contents of the 'little folio of four pages' gathering the goings on of the great Babel, as food for future rumination; and he would have read the speech of the Chancellor, had not more important concerns carried him away,—for old John Queeney, the shoemaker in the back street, longs to see Mr. Cowper by his bed-side. Mr. Newton, John's minister, is in London; and though John and Mr. Cowper are in nowise acquainted, saving seeing each other in church, there are dear ties and blessed hopes common to both; so Cowper

goes off immediately. But since Mrs. Unwin insists that it is a cold damp night, he takes his great-coat, though only to please her, and Sam marches before with the lantern. John Queeney has but one poor room, Sam would be an intruder there; and as it is harsh to have him wait in the street, like the attendant or horses of a fine lady, Sam is sent home by his amiable master.

"When, in an hour afterwards, Mr. Cowper returns, he tells that John Queeney is dying, and will probably not see over the night; that he is ill indeed, but that the king and the nobles of England might gladly exchange states with that poor shoemaker, in the back street of Olney,—his warfare was accomplished!—Mrs. Unwin understands him; she breathes a silent inward prayer, for her dying fellow-creature, and fellow-Christian; and no more is said on this subject. Cowper, now in a steady and cheerful voice, reads the outline of a petition he has drawn out in name of the poor lace-workers of Olney, against an intended duty on candles. On them such a tax would have fallen grievously. 'My dear Mr. Cowper, this is more like

an indignant remonstrance than a humble petition,' said his friend, with her placid smile.

"'Indeed and I fear it is,—how could it well be otherwise? but this must be modified; the poet's imprudence must not hurt the poor lace-workers' cause.'

"And now Sam brings in supper—a Roman meal, in the days of Rome's heroic simplicity; and when it is withdrawn, Hannah, the sole maid-servant, comes in to say she has carried one blanket to Widow Jennings, and another to Jenny Hibberts; and that the shivering children had actually danced round, and hugged, and kissed the comfortable night-clothing, for lack of which they perished; and that the women themselves shed tears of thankfulness, for this well-timed, much-wanted supply.

"'And you were sure to tell them they came not from us,' said the poet.—Hannah replied that she had, and withdrew.

"'These blankets cannot cost the generous Thornton above ten shillings a-piece, Mr. Cowper,' says Mrs. Unwin. 'Oh! how many a ten shillings, that would, in this severe season, soften the lot of the in-

dustrious poor, are every night lavished in the city he inhabits! how many blankets would the opera-tickets of this *one* night purchase! And can any *one* human creature, have the heart or the right thus to lavish, yea, though not sinfully, yet surely not without blame, while but *one* other of the same great family perishes of hunger, or of cold?'

"And they speak of their poor neighbours by name; they know many of them, their good qualities, their faults, and their necessities; and fireside discourse flows on in the easy current of old, endeared, and perfect intimacy; and Cowper is led incidentally, to talk of dark passages in his earlier life; of the Providence which had guided and led him to this resting-place 'by the green pastures, and still waters;' of the mercy in which he had been afflicted; of a great deliverance suddenly wrought; of the ARM which had led him into the wilderness, while 'the banner over him was love;' and then the talk ebbs back to old friends, now absent; to domestic cares, and little family concerns and plans; the garden, or the greenhouse, matter 'fond and trivial,' yet interesting, and clothed in the language of a poet, and adorned by a poet's fancy.

"I must again ask, had the Lord High Chancellor ever gained to his heart any one intelligent and affectionate woman, to whom he could thus unbend his mind,—pour forth his heart of hearts—in the unchilled confidence of a never failing sympathy? This I shall consider,—the possession of this friend, an immense weight in Cowper's scale, when we come to adjust the balance," said Mr. Dodsley.

"'I must now read you the fruits of my morning's study, ma'am,' says our poet, after a pause; 'I had well-nigh forgot that;' and he reads his sublime requiem, on the loss of the Royal George.

"'I am mistaken if this be not wonderfully grand, Mr. Cowper,' says his ancient critic. 'But hark! our cuckoo clock. It must be regulated—you forget your duties, sir—Tiney must be put up, and'—

"'You must just allow me, Mary, to give one puff of the bellows, to the greenhouse embers. The air feels chilly to-night—my precious orange-tree.' And Mrs. Unwin smiles over his fond care, as the gentleman walks off with the bellows under his arm.

"And now it is the stated hour of family worship. Sam and Hannah march forward in decent order.

But I shall not attempt to describe the pious household rites, where the author of the Task is priest and worshipper. Affectionate 'Goodnights' close the scene. And this is the order of the evenings at Olney.

"Cowper regulates the cuckoo clock; for though he has no alarum watch, nor impending audience of majesty, he lays many duties on himself, lowly yet not ignoble; so about the same hour that the Chancellor rolls off for Windsor, Cowper, also alert in duty, is penning his fair copy of the lace-workers' petition to Parliament, or despatching one of his playful, affectionate epistles to his cousin, Lady Hesketh, or acknowledging the bounty of the benevolent Thornton to the poor of Olney. And now, body and mind refreshed, the blessings of the night remembered, and the labours of the day dedicated in short prayer and with fervent praise, and he is in his greenhouse study, chill though it be, for it is quiet and sequestered. See here, Fanny—our last picture. But so minutely has the poet described his favourite retreat that this sketch may be deemed superfluous labour. Yet this is and will

ever be a cherished spot; for here many of his virtuous days were spent.

"Why pursue the theme farther," continued the Curate, "you all know the simple tenor of his life:—

> 'Thus did he travel on life's common way,
> In cheerful godliness.'

The visitations to which his delicately-organized mind was liable, I put out of view. They were a mystery beyond his mortal being—far beyond our limited human intelligence. And tell me now, my young friends, which, at the close of his memorable life, may be pronounced the best, and, by consequence, the happiest man of our three Westminster boys? Each was 'sprung of earth's first blood;' and though I do not assert that any one of the three is a faultless model, it is a fair question to ask, which has your suffrage?—He who, by the force of his intellect and ambition, the hardihood and energy of his character, took his place at the head of the councils of this mighty empire,—he, the conqueror of so fair a portion of the East, who, by arms and policy, knit another mighty empire to this,—or he

—'the stricken deer,' who sought the shades, the arrow rankling in his side—who dwelt apart, in 'blest seclusion from a jarring world,' and who, as his sole memorial and trophy, has left us

'This single volume paramount.'"

And Mr. Dodsley lifted Sophia's small and elegant copy of Cowper's works, and gave it into the hand of the youth next him.

An animated discussion now arose, and when Miss Harding collected the votes, she found the young gentlemen were equally divided between Hastings and Thurlow. The young ladies were, however, unanimous for Cowper, and the Curate gave his suffrage with theirs, repeating,

"Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares—
The poets—who, on earth have made us heirs
Of truth, and pure delight, by heavenly lays."

THE CURATE'S TALE,

OR PRACTICAL JOKING.

I CANNOT endure, said Mr. Dodsley, to see young persons attempting to frighten each other; or, by idle tricks, trying to excite those superstitious horrors which, more or less, haunt every mind. This idle practice, even when it fails of the full intended effect, is at best a wanton sporting with the most awful of the human passions, and treating with lightness a class of objects that ought to be approached with reverence and delicacy. A species of foolery, always ill-bred, has, in many known instances, become, in the highest degree, cruel and criminal; and by the vulgar tricks of the most despicable of creatures, the noblest mind has been shattered. Fear is the most mortal of human passions; combined in its extreme degree with superstitious horror, it may be considered as a supernatural passion, a state in which the reasoning powers

are prostrated, and, for the time, suspended by those strange instincts which are a mystery of man's nature. Under mental spasm, or convulsion of other kinds, the tension of the mind abates gradually;—fear—excessive fear—fear combined with preternatural horror, or consisting wholly of that maddening feeling, finds but one of three terminations—a temporary suspension of the vital powers,—instant death,—or frenzy. Is this then a passion to be tampered with?

Susceptibility to panic-fears, to the unaccountable horrors termed antipathies, and, above all, to superstitious terror, are compatible with a very high degree of moral courage, and even with great personal intrepidity. Seamen probably possess more firmness of nerve, promptitude of mind, and physical energy, than any other description of men, yet who so liable to superstitious influences? "The soldier," says Addison, "who could march up undauntedly to a breach, will start at his own shadow in the dark." Several of the more sagacious among the inferior animals, are evidently liable to the agony of panic-fears. The war-horse will tremble under his rider, and burst into the cold

perspiration of fear; the courageous dog will shrink back, and cower, and howl, in apprehension of some imaginary object of horror invisible to his master; and, I must say, that the man who can at all times, and in all situations, resist these vague fears, and despise the dim and shadowless objects of the groundless horrors disclaimed by human reason, but quailed under by human instincts, must be a Bacon or a brute,—must have the spirit of an angel, or be dull as the fat weed that rots by Lethe's brink.

Besides ghosts and hobgoblins, allowed, from hoar antiquity, to be quite irresistible by a winter's hearth, there is an entire class of objects, which few persons, under sudden surprisal, can view with perfect calmness or indifference: coffins, shrouds, graves, cairns, corpses, skeletons, skulls, and cross-bones; the wind howling through the murderer's bones as they hang bleaching on the common; the gibbet-irons swinging and rattling in the blast. The man who, at midnight, or in deep darkness, the teeming Mother of horrors, can pass such objects unmoved, must have nerves differently framed from mine. Even in my lasiest mood,

I never grudge a few additional paces, which, in the dark, may keep me clear of the churchyard path, and of the shade of its melancholy yews; and though "love casteth out fear," and I am quite as much convinced as any anatomist whatever, that a dead man will not rise and eat me, nor yet tell tales to me, nor of me, yet his lack-lustre eyes might suggest so much,—his fallen chops might give such broad grins and palpable hints, that I confess I should have no particular affection for being locked up for a long night, with the dead body of the man for whom I had no especial regard while he was alive. I should reckon him but sorry company; and if the resurrection man, who attempted to burst his cerements, and drag him from his grave, were not the most brutalized ruffian known in civilised society, a thousand degrees beneath the common hangman, he would deserve to be reckoned the bravest fellow on earth.

These reflections are suggested by a circumstance which lately came to my knowledge, and which has pressed on me ever since like a nightmare, or hideous dream.

Be it known that I spent the Christmas holidays, some years ago, with an Indian friend, at what he considers his home while in England,—the residence namely of his mother's sister. My friend's aunt, a wealthy, independent, childless dowager, lives in a fine old manor-house, near the scene of her wedded life, in that patrician division of Old England, proudly named VALE ROYAL.

Christmas-tide had, and still possesses, many immunities of heart and hearth;—

> "'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale,
> 'Twas Christmas broached the stoutest ale."

It was also Christmas that brought forth the brightest points of fireside joys, even when throwing a deeper and broader shade over all social hilarities, by its prescriptive privilege of pouring forth the most dolorous of ghost stories.

Among the "troops of friends" whom wealth, honour, benevolence, and length of days drew around our venerable hostess, there was a Miss Pembroke, a maiden of that age when an entertaining, sensible woman, besides being a pleasant, becomes a safe, unsuspected companion, subjecting

even the determined old bachelor, swathed in celibacy and fleecy hosiery, to no keener joke than may be easily either parried or borne. This lady, the daughter of the deceased rector of a neighbouring parish, was thoroughly acquainted with old family-history,—at least so far as this and the adjoining counties were concerned. It was from her I drew the particulars of the following narrative:—

One evening—it was on a Saturday, an evening on which amusements and secular affairs were always early closed in this regular household, that we had finished our rubber, and drawn closer round the fireside. From talking of a singular circumstance, recorded in a recent periodical, the discourse flowed naturally into those channels so congenial to a winter's hearth—ghostly warnings, supernatural terrors, mysterious appearances, and their attendant horrors.

"Ah! poor Charlotte Hope!" sighed my chatty, pleasant friend, Miss Pembroke. "Quite in this neighbourhood the thing happened, sir,—at Mr. S——'s, not three miles off;—the S——s have been a melancholy family ever since."

"Ah! poor, sweet Charlotte!" responded our hostess; "the rose of my Christmas garland. She always gave a few days, about this season, sir, to the old woman;—and happy days she brought, poor thing. Such a cheerful, intelligent, kind-hearted, handsome young creature, blighted in a moment—and so strangely!—but this is one of those dark dispensations, one of those trials of our faith in unerring wisdom, and in unbounded love, which are sometimes mysteriously sent to perfect our faith and patience, ere yet our peace be perfected." The good old lady looked reverently but silently upwards. Every eye in the circle, that had ever rested on the general young favourite alluded to, was, I perceived, glistening. My curiosity was all alive; and there was a sympathetic tenderness and interest in my feelings, which entitled them to a higher name than that of mere common curiosity.

Miss Charlotte Hope was, I found, the only and orphan child of a gentleman who had risen high in the navy, and had been able to leave her a handsome independence. As she had no immediate family ties, after leaving an excellent private school, she visited more among an extensive and high con-

nexion both in England and Scotland, than might have been good for her future domestic habits, had she not, as my informant said, contrived to make a home wherever she went, and to create and carry about with her the duties, the affection, and the peace of home. "Her heart and mind were ever alive and active, and ever in their right place," said Miss Pembroke. "She was still so young, that she had formed no establishment of her own; but of her handsome income she already made the most generous use. Well may I say this if you knew all, sir; and Charlotte's kindness was as delicate as it was judicious,—her benevolence as steady as it was free of all ostentation. You must forgive me, sir; yet Charlotte rose so far above her peers, that I can scarce hope to give you even a faint idea of her excellence. Ask any one who ever had the pleasure of her acquaintance what she was. How many generous energies were paralyzed,—how many warm sympathies extinguished when her heart was struck!—Oh! sir, her fate was dark and dreadful!"

"My dear Miss Pembroke," I said; for I had neither fear nor shame in calling this worthy maiden

"dear;" besides, the epithet of tenderness was, as I have often seen it, the softening prelude to a gentle remonstrance, "you whet my curiosity beyond endurance; may I beg you will proceed with your story?"

"There is no story, sir—positively none. 'Twas the simplest thing in the world, how it fell out. The little circumstances of which Charlotte's poor friend has a thousand times since told me would not have been worth notice, but as connected with her fate."

In hearing the story of a woman, I am afraid it is next to impossible to refrain from wishing to know something—ay, and a good deal too—about her personal appearance. The footing on which I was with Miss Pembroke made this an easier affair than I have sometimes found it. Every body must have observed how desperately, and with what inveterate good-will, rival beauties, artists, and authors, praise each other; but here there were no pretensions to rivalship, and therefore no excessive panegyric.

"Charlotte Hope was not what is properly called beautiful, sir," said my fair friend; "she was not

even, at least in features, what is called handsome; but every one allowed the charm of Charlotte's face, though no one could define it. It was varying,—fugitive; it never left her face, but it flitted about,—in the eyes, in the open brow, in the frank smile, in the smiling of the eyes, in the look of good sense ever brightening into arch good-humour, or dimpling into almost broad or roguish mirth. Her person certainly was fine,—universally allowed so; large rather, for her years, but free, full, and of fine and flowing proportions. Though, in process of years, it might have become more massive and less elastic, at twenty-three her form was perfect. Charlotte's charm was, after all, in her manners, or rather in the disposition from which her manners flowed, her warm sympathies, her genial cordiality and frankness of address, and the unbounded capacity of loving and finding delight in every thing she looked upon. In every threshold she crossed, little arms were wrapped round Charlotte's knees,—little mouths held up, in rosy clusters, to be kissed by Charlotte:—old dogs wagged their tails in welcome, and grey domestics had pri-

vate nods, and whispered information about favourite plants or animals distinguished by Charlotte on former visits. If Charlotte, coming with great and ceremonious company, was not always welcomed by the first salutations of her hostess, she was ever indemnified by the last embrace, and the whispered welcome ever turned to 'dear Charlotte,' with the whispered sentence of, 'my poor mother!' or, 'my children will be so happy *you* are come.'

"As Charlotte never considered children a plague, they never plagued her. Servants where she visited found her less troublesome than those who were not half so liberal to them; ever prompt to rescue the awkward from the consequences of their blunders, or good-humouredly to excuse or inform the stupid. She was equally ready to relieve any unhappy lady, the victim of morning visiters, of part of her weary load, or to share in the pains and penalties of a grand entertainment given in the house where she was a guest. If a single hand were at any time needed to make up a whist-table for "the ancients," then Charlotte loved cards; or if, unhappily, two were wanted, she still

was all she could be, a most patient, accommodating *dumbmy* or *dead-man*.

"In every house she visited, Charlotte was always the first up,—the first dressed,—the first ready for church,—for a ball,—for a rural ramble, or a visit to her acquaintances in the cottages in the vicinity. Her apartment, her books, her wardrobe, her ornaments, were, at all times, in the highest order; and Charlotte Hope had time, and spirits, and heart, and good-nature, for every thing. If a hostess were frying over fish growing cold, or a host fuming over wine growing hot, Charlotte was ever ready to lace the boddice or fix the comb or cap of any lazy dresser for whom dinner lagged. If any lady had a brilliant, high-toned voice, Charlotte could sing a second sweetly, and with the rare excellence of being always in true tune; or if, haply, the fair musical exhibiter's voice was rich and low, Charlotte could manage a first part, or at least afford her particular friends so exquisite an imitation of the elaborate trills and cadences, and fluttering warbles of Madame A. or Miss B., as to give more pleasure, and to draw down heartier applause than is often bestowed on the

highest degree of amateur proficiency. In families where there was no aunt past her dancing, though still in the prime of her playing days, no governess or humble dependant to act orchestra, Charlotte's quadrilles and waltzes were unfailing, though her own nimble toes, emulating her fingers, might sometimes have itched after a keenly relished amusement. She had many correspondents among her numerous connexions, and found time to remember them all, and yet to write notes on all useful household affairs for her lazy friends; to copy her own new music for those of her female acquaintance who had more musical taste than superfluous money; and even to sing ballads, work frills, and make sketches for those she was sure would value her performances, because they were hers. These accomplishments, all exquisite in their kind, did not in the least impeach or impair her talent for embellishing paper kites with suitable emblems and devices; making vignettes for dilapidated copies of such of the minor classics as the History of Cock-Robin and Jenny Wren, (that architect even more wonderful than Sir Christopher of the same name;) painting and repainting dolls' cheeks, and

furnishing them with new black eyes; and assisting old economical dowagers with their millinery, or little boys, when in terror of nursery-maids, severe in their notions of cleanliness and propriety in cases of garments torn, or palms soiled at the bold game of leap-frog.

"Yet Charlotte had her faults," said my friend. "She had that warmth and haste of indignation which often accompanies a frank and generous temper; and her shrewdness of observation was but too often the minister to her love of mirth, and keen perception of the ludicrous."

I learned, at greater length than I choose to record, that this lively and fine-tempered, noble and happy girl, had been expected, late in the year 181–, at the house of the gentleman before alluded to, whom I shall here call Seymour. He was a man of good fortune and fashion, whose ancestors had lived on the same estate in Vale Royal, probably from the time of the Conquest. The family was wealthy for the style in which they lived, which was with the quiet, unostentatious dignity of the best, if not the richest class of English landed gentry. This gentleman had been one of Charlotte's

guardians, and was, besides, related to her mother; though this was but half her tie with the Seymour family.

Mrs. Seymour, when Sophia Spencer, had been Charlotte's school-fellow; and to the little orphan-girl, nearly ten years younger than herself, Sophia felt as an affectionate elder sister. There were many subordinate collateral ties. Sophia's brother had been a midshipman in Charlotte's father's ship, even before Charlotte was born, and owed to Captain Hope's kindness a thorough knowledge of his profession, and an enthusiastic desire of distinction in the service. Sophia, moreover, said, that she owed her husband, "the best husband in England"—all an English wife can say of praise—"to Charlotte Hope;" and it was certain that, on Mr. John Seymour's visits to his little cousin at her school, Miss Spencer's beauty, and Miss Spencer's goodness and cleverness, warmly extolled by the grateful little girl, led to consequences, that, shrewd as she was, she could not have foreseen, though she learned to rejoice in them; for she was taken from school for a whole week, and at eleven years old made the proud and happy bridemaid of Sophia.

This was grown an old affair; for Sophia's eldest boy was now at sea with his uncle.

Every new child had been a new claim on Charlotte's affections, and much of her time, after leaving school, was spent with her early friend who was often in delicate health,—spent in inspiriting the drooping mother, delighting the children, and spreading the blessings of her intelligence, and the warmth and brightness of her temper in sunshine over the entire household. Charlotte thought her friend's children almost her own, and certainly "the finest in England," using in speaking of them the true old English superlative. Mr. Seymour as undoubtingly thought her by far "the finest girl in England;" and with Mrs. Seymour to love Charlotte, and depend on her active kindness and affection, was now so much a confirmed habit as to have become second nature. She loved Charlotte so much as to forget what she owed to her.

Though Mr. Seymour's family were not what is called gay people, they yet saw a good deal of company, and very often had visiters living in the house. There were now—about Christmas—many young persons assembled there, wards, and

nephews, and nieces, and the grown-up children of old friends, gay lads from the university, and lively girls from school, besides a proportion of that *nommade* portion of the British population which circulates from house to house, and of which the welcome may generally be understood in "a parliamentary sense," that is, to be no welcome at all.

Captain Richard Spencer, who, nearly twenty years before, had made a deep impression on the heart of Charlotte Hope, was, this season, the star of his sister's happy domestic circle; which was, however, incomplete to Mrs. Seymour, without "Charlotte;" a blank to Mr. Seymour, without her he called "Brightest and Best" shining out upon them, and bringing forth all their lights and shadows.

The winter's day of Charlotte's expected arrival wore away, without her appearance. All day long there had been a strict watch kept from the nursery windows. Dinner was twice ordered back, and Mrs. Seymour became rather uneasy. It was a snowy blustering day, and intensely cold.

"No fear of Charlotte," said Mr. Seymour; "the worst that can happen is an overturn, and out of

that she will construct a capital adventure. Her firmness and presence of mind never desert her;—what would frighten a delicate damsel to death or into hysterics, will only open a mine of pleasantry and ridicule to Charlotte. I do not think it possible to intimidate her in real danger, much less to scare her with bugbears and false alarms."

"You are to understand, Captain Spencer, that Miss Hope is this gentleman's Beautiful Invincible," said Miss Pitman, a lady who contrived to have some hereditary claim on Mrs. Seymour's hospitality; and visited her every year, for no better reason than that she had afflicted her mother in a similar way. Some of the junior misses suspected that the arrival of her old acquaintance, Captain Spencer, had not shortened Miss Pitman's visit at this time. She was very patriotic, and particularly admired the naval service.

"I perfectly remember the young lady," said Captain Spencer; "a broad-set, rosy, stump of a child, with a lively affectionate temper, and merry, frank, black eyes; as ready to give a cuff as willing to

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opinion of her woman-grown friend, and also
·d Miss Pitman not to think of her at all; so
ıterrupted her eloquent husband, by request-
:m to order dinner.

e party had not finished their soup, when a
ıb was heard on the stairs. Mr. Edward
ey, a young Oxonian, a cousin of Charlotte's,
without having the audacity, or, as he said,
ıpudence to become her lover, was exceedingly
d of her, and wondered very much that his
ıw-collegians, the young Marquis of B———,
. Lord M———, who had met her, were not
ıng in love for her,—started from his seat, and
ıs followed by his sister, Kate.

The dining-room, blazing with old family pic-
ıres, old family plate, and young family faces, was
ıresently half-deserted. In spite of Miss Pitman and decorum, juvenile uncles outstripped more juvenile nephews, all dining propriety was violated, and an irruption of the young Goths, who had fir[illegible] the carriage, burst down stairs, in spite [illegible]emonstrances and screams, and Betty's [illegible]g clutches interposed on the top of the [illegible]pair." All met in the old hall, and Cap-

tain Spencer left alone, at table, with Miss Pitman, could now have envied the shaking of hands, and more vulgar smackings of lips, and light laughter, and gay welcomes circulating there.

"Brightest and best! how is it that with your *chronometric* punctuality, you have to-night so alarmed Sophia?" said Seymour.

Charlotte looked to her friend—"I was not greatly alarmed, Charlotte; I would let none of these volunteer knights go in search of you; and had I been alarmed, you know, I would have sent them all off. But why so late? the poor children have so longed for you all day."

"O! the old story,—an overturn—the snow," cried Charlotte. "Ah! Ned Stanley!—and you too, 'my Kate of Kates!'"—Charlotte gave a hand to each cousin.—"An overturn, as I said; but so tame a one:—no danger, and no glory, no Black Forest, no brave knight; nothing, in short, but terribly cold feet, Sophia;—and, John, tremendous appetite—*Fee! fa! fum!*—I'll eat *you* Dick," said she, now turning, and smilingly caressing the little boy, who with other two children clung round her knees.

"And famous snipes shot by a certain gentle-

man with one hand," whispered Mr. Seymour. "So quick, cast your slough—off with your wrap-rascal!—Shine out Charlotte!"

"Snipes of whose shooting, Sophia?" whispered Charlotte, with a comic face of alarm, directed, however, to her friend little Dick.

"Do have the goodness, Mr. Edward Stanley, to request my brother to take my place at table for five minutes, till, with my own eyes, I have seen careless Miss Hope take off her wrappings, and make herself comfortable," said Mrs. Seymour, ever as prudent as polite.

"O! gracious! is it possible?" again cried Charlotte, "snipes shot with one hand, Dick?" and Charlotte's face became, Dick thought, more and more *droll* and "*funny*," and also, it might have been remarked, a little more rosy.

"Seamen do the honours of a table so charmingly," continued the prudent Mrs. Seymour, "though poor Richard, who once carved so well, can carve no longer."

"But, like the spoonbill, may still

'Obligingly ladle the soup,'"

said Kate Stanley, a heyden of fourteen, who was

very fond of Charlotte Hope, though Charlotte found more fault with her, and "scolded her more," she said, "than all the world besides."

Charlotte, of whatever she was really thinking, seemed quite occupied with the little children, during the minute in which this passed. Their father now affected to chase them from her. "Off, ye rogues! do you mean to eat Miss Hope for your supper!" and they all ran laughing off to tell nurse how like a giant Miss Hope looked when she said "Fee! fa! fum!" and to seek out all the rarities uncle Richard had brought, that they might shew them to Miss Hope; for they were quite sure she would soon come to visit them in their own nursery. Little Charlotte, a lady almost four years old, assured the younger ones they "might depend on that; her good godmother always did that;" and then a quarrel arose, as will happen in the best-regulated nurseries, about which had the best right to Miss Hope's kindness and attention; for though Charlotte was her goddaughter, little Dick was likewise her godson, and was, old Martha said, her "darling, curly-pated pet."

Charlotte the elder was meanwhile stoutly push-

ing her less agile friend up stairs before her. "Gracious, Sophia! and why did you not write me that Captain Spencer was here—how shall I face him!—once so tenderly beloved! O, Sophia! conceive the delicate distress," continued Charlotte laughing. "If there were but time to be sentimental—but I am so hungry, and those snipes may fly off. I know Miss Pitman loves the breast of at least *one*."

The pelisse was now stripped off, the brown locks were braided, the tight-fitting gown, of a ruddy-brown, lustrous silk, was already assumed, the lace frills were fixed.

"As quickly dressed as if the boatswain had piped all hands aloft," said Mrs. Seymour. "And, my dear Charlotte, now that I see you dressed, how charming you are looking."

"I am glad of that—I shall be sure to charm at least one gentleman to-night—little Dick:—there, fix that clasp. But baby George—how many teeth has he now?"

"Only one since my last letter—dear, *wee* seed-pearl, and another bud just coming; but better news than that, Charlotte, Richard has got a ship,

and may marry to-morrow—rich enough now! Did you see it in the papers?"

"George's tooth?—positively not; I am, I fear, a careless reader of the political articles, even though furnished by a deep genius like you, Sophia. But, come, I am ready to face the enemy, and do battle bravely, if needful.—Cruel, cruel man!" continued Charlotte, laughing, "who at five years old, made so deep an impression on my susceptible heart."

"Through the medium of dolls and sugar comfits, I suspect."

"You know nothing of 'young, passionate love,' Sophia," said Charlotte, still laughing; "and you, accordingly, in your ignorance, wrong me and the tender passion prodigiously. I would no more have been in love for sugar comfits at five, than I would for diamonds at twenty-five. My Lilliputian flame was both sad and serious, and most disinterested. I hope, that, like the small-pox and the scarlet fever, a lady is liable to but one love attack in the course of her life. At least here am I, who, deeply in love at seven, am, at twenty-three, heart-whole."

Charlotte indulged in another fit of tittering over

her recollections. "This fairy conquest must have been very entertaining, I should think, to your brother,—that is, if he remember it."

Mrs. Seymour shook her head, which was full of ideas Charlotte would not understand.

"Heartless woman! do you still doubt? had I not every symptom—shy, sensitive, jealous. I could have torn out Miss Pitman's eyes; and I was so enamoured! O! I was the most lovelorn of all little damsels!—But here is Martha. Ah, Martha, soup for me. So like your kind thoughtfulness. And I have for you a gross of spectacles, besides the Sherlock you wished for, on a type you might read a mile off."

"Then, Miss Charlotte, but you be too good and too merry for this world; minding everything and every one; and all about you, so right, and kind and proper."

"Thanks, Martha! but don't you, Martha, remember how desperately I was in love with Captain Spencer long ago."

"Lauk! now, Miss Charlotte, you were very funny at that same time, to be so little a Missy."

"No funning to me, Martha;—but tell your children I'll be up to kiss them all before they sleep, and try on their new shoes."

Mrs. Seymour shut the door after the old favourite domestic. "I declare, Charlotte, your childish passion is the most wonderful thing of the kind I ever heard of. It looks like fate."

"Not in the least wonderful; nor more like fate, Sophia, than your, according to rule, falling in love with my cousin John; after he, according to the course of nature and practice of England, fell in love with you; and marrying him, instead of any other sensible, well-bred, landed, or professional gentleman of these three kingdoms, who had not the same opportunities of seeing and proposing for (as the newspapers say) the elegant, amiable, and accomplished Sophia Spencer."

"Impossible, you know, Charlotte, that I could ever have loved any man save Mr. Seymour."

"I won't swear to what you might have done, Sophia; but certain sure I am you cannot now love any one half so deserving of your affection as my honest cousin John. Hark! his hearty laugh

from below. I know of nothing half so cordial in a cold winter's afternoon, as John's warm welcome, and roasted snipes. Let us down to them."

"I trust you will like Richard as well as his snipes, Charlotte; I have but one remaining, ungratified wish on earth, but I fancy I must not breathe it."

"Then I won't ask you, nor tempt you, nor even guess at it; and whether I like Captain Spencer or not, I must face him.—O, Sophia, what if I should relapse to night," Charlotte continued laughingly; "physicians all agree that a relapse is far more dangerous than the original attack."

"I'm afraid there is no danger."

"You are afraid?—Yes, thank heaven I have weathered all my 'critical moments,' fifteen years ago. I rather think I love every body too well nowadays to care very much for any body, mankind,—which of course includes womankind,—too much to care at all for the Johns, and Peters, or even Richards. Still I have a warm corner in my heart for a few of the creatures—for your little Dick for instance."

It was another trait of Charlotte's character, that mothers, too delicate and sensible to obtrude

the charms and abilities of their offspring on the general ear, could yet confide "the amiable weakness" to "so discriminating and good hearted a girl as Charlotte Hope." The great improvement of Dick, personal and mental, accordingly furnished a subject of female prattle, that lasted till the ladies reached the dining-room.

"Ha! Brighest and Best! welcome back to your old cozy nook, between the fire and my elbow," cried Mr. Seymour. "Evacuate, Ned Stanley." Charlotte, bowing and smiling, took her wonted place, and Mr. Seymour soon whispered, "Yonder far-off mahogany-coloured man,—do you see him?—that is our Richard. How do you like him now you see him, Charlotte?"

"You must give me a slice of mutton in order to consolidate my opinions, John: though one may remain in love, no one ever fell into it upon an empty stomach—that is heartily."

"I tremble to ask what you think of yon sunburnt mutilated man, Charlotte," said Mrs. Seymour, as soon as she again got her friend alone. "He is, as you see, Charlotte, what *girls* call old; and climate and hard service have wrought sad change

on him, poor fellow. Richard was reckoned handsome when a youth"

"The loss of an arm surely is a loss, and that a *fairish* skin may sometimes be better than a tanned one, I readily grant you, Sophia."

Mrs. Seymour sighed, and followed her guests to the drawing-room, and Charlotte went to the nursery, at all times the scene of her especial recreation. Here there rose an immense buzz about "Uncle Richard, the sailor uncle," who had ordered toys for the inmates with true sailor-like profusion; who romped with right good will, and had that capital and rare quality, of not soon tiring of a romp. He attempted to tell stories too like "their dear, good Charlotte;" but with all his good will, was but a poor substitute for her, in this most difficult art.

In the drawing-room, Captain Spencer was particularly introduced to Miss Hope by his sister. To him she was already an object of curiosity and interest. While they talked gaily and carelessly together, he was secretly comparing the radiant young woman before him, with the "broad, stumpy, rosy little girl" of his recollections, and with his

preconceived idea of the favourite friend of his sister, and the idol of his little nephews and nieces. Whatever his opinions were, they were confined to his own breast.

For the next three weeks, husband and wife nightly compared notes, and both acknowledged, that however it might be with Captain Spencer, (and Mr. Seymour was somewhat indignant at his inaptitude to fall in love,) Charlotte was the same happy, cheerful, joy-giving young woman she had always been. The only consolation that Mrs. Seymour now had, was, that Charlotte, she was certain, had no preference for any man whatever.

One morning this lady sought her friend. "My dear Charlotte, this Sir Reginald Henning absolutely persists in seeing you,—he will imagine John and I coop you up here for some selfish purpose; though heaven knows—denying the selfishness entirely—I only wish it were as he imagines. Mr. Seymour and I hoped,—but marriages are no doubt made in heaven,—I am more and more confirmed in the belief—'What must be must be.'"

"A good few of them apparently in the other place, Sophia," said Charlotte, laughing,—"not

to be mentioned to ears polite,—but by far the greater number in this dim region of middle-earth, without a hope or a motive beyond its dull, clayey surface."

"Then you will see Sir Reginald?" inquired Mrs. Seymour, a little startled; for he had what is called "a considerable stake," on that earth's surface where marriages are determined.

"If he is as resolute as you say,—and if what must be must be."

"Far am I, Charlotte, from wishing *improperly* to influence your choice: Sir Reginald, with all mothers, and most daughters, will, I acknowledge, be regarded as quite an unexceptionable match; yet I had hoped"—Charlotte smiled, and Mrs. Seymour went to her husband. She had done all, she said, that was consistent with the delicacy due to her friend, and the honour of all concerned.

"I cannot believe Charlotte will marry for a paltry title and a little pelf," said Mr. Seymour.

"Nor will she; but this Sir Reginald, to do him justice, is really a good-tempered, handsome man. My dear John, girls—ay even with the sense of Charlotte Hope—have a very different way

of estimating these poor fleeting advantages of youth and figure, from *us*, mothers of families. What a husband would Richard have made her in every possible circumstance of their united lives! Thank heaven I still have you, John, and my dear children.—I shall lose my friend:—no—no, Lady Henning can never be to me what Charlotte Hope has been."

Mrs. Seymour openly avowed that she would not inquire into the result of Sir Reginald's interview with Charlotte, and her husband betted that she could not refrain, even for one hour. He was right. The Baronet's audience was no sooner over than she joined Charlotte in the drawing-room. The young lady was repairing the tackle of a ship for her friend Dick.

"Such employment for Lady Henning!" cried Mrs. Seymour. "Am I to congratulate her Ladyship?"

"Sophia, this is not like you; you don't use me kindly. I do not know what, in other circumstances, I might have done. How many young women—ay, gentlewomen of birth, beauty, accomplishment, far, far beyond mine, *must marry* be-

cause they *must live*, or imagine they must, in a certain style. Thank Heaven, my father's providence, and my own good spirit, I have the power to tell Sir Reginald, and all his kind, 'I won't have you, because I don't like you: I have £10,000; and choose rather to be a happy old maid than a discontented though a titled matron.'"

"Yet, my dear," said Mrs. Seymour, embracing her, "Captain Hope always said, in joke, his little Charlotte would not, he was sure, live an old maid, if she could help it."

"My father's opinions were seldom erroneous," returned Charlotte, smiling. "I'll certainly marry the first man, however old or maimed, Sophia, that asks me, provided I like him; but then I must like him, and *he must* ask me—'these are two things.'"

Mrs. Seymour, with joyful tears, clasped her friend in her arms, and kissed her all over in ecstacy.

"Oh! shocking, Sophia! you have a broader kiss than John's welcoming one; you slobber as bad as little Dick."

"If I durst but venture to guess who that happy man might be. Poor Sir Reginald! I *am* sorry

for him *now*, Charlotte. I am sure I wish him the nicest, prettiest, richest young woman in the county, for a wife, with all my heart, since he is not to get you.—I hope he will be able to eat his dinner with us, poor man."

Mr. Seymour had driven out that morning with his brother-in-law and Miss Kate Stanley. He mentioned that he was to have Sir Reginald's company at dinner, as he pointed out his fine, modern mansion in the distance, "a dangler of Charlotte's," said he; "a resolute, determined admirer rather, for Charlotte admits no danglers. He has served his terms fairly now; and, I presume, the charmer must, one of these days, take pity. Captain Spencer made no observation. When he spoke next, it was to inquire about the management of a turnip-field lying before them, remarkable for neatness of cultivation.

The radiant smile with which Mrs. Seymour met her husband, spoke the dismissal of Sir Reginald as plainly as her words. The dogged air of bravado, assumed by the young baronet at dinner, was stronger confirmation. Captain Spencer, less observant or less cool, drew a different

conclusion. He even mentioned that he had received letters, on his return, ordering him to join his ship, which was to sail in a month for Malta. To this sudden call, Mr. Edward Stanley imputed his air of gravity and abstraction. Miss Pitman and young Kate Stanley had each her own theory. From Charlotte's behaviour nothing could be construed. She looked, and moved, and talked, and smiled, as gay, as polite, and as disengaged as ever; alive to all that was going forward, whether of useful, pleasant, or mirthful.

Sir Reginald Henning went off immediately after the ladies had retired, without even going up to the drawing-room to swallow that tributary cup of coffee, that tax, levied by the Graces, upon the independent country gentlemen of England; and, like other compulsory levies, often submitted to with considerable growling by that bold and free-born race of men.

"Ah, poor fellow!" said Mr. Seymour, unable to keep his wife's secret. "A fine, spirited young fellow, though; Charlotte would have made a man of him; we should have had him in for the county.

I cannot guess what Charlotte is after,—positively the best match now going in this quarter."

When the gentlemen entered the drawing-room, they found the ladies all huddled together about the one fire-place, examining the contents of a box of millinery, just arrived from London, while Charlotte sat by the far-off fireside, with her god-daughter on her knee. The child had been indisposed all day. Among Charlotte's other accomplishments, she was, it has been said, an admirable storyteller. Her memory was amply stored, from the rhyming jingle that charmed little Dick, to "the story of Cambuscan bold," which inspired the elder boys of the family. But no memory, however richly fraught, can long satisfy the insatiable demands of the mind, either old or young, in which the love of the new and the marvellous is once fairly awakened, and the invention of the Scheherazade of the nursery was prompt and fertile. Charlotte, the younger, fancied she had a double claim on the time and talents of her "own godmother," who was telling her the ever-delightful dramatic tale of Little Red Riding-Hood, when Captain

Spencer approached, sat down on a stool by them, and began to play with his little niece. Miss Hope not supposing him particularly interested in what Red Riding-Hood said to her grandmamma the wolf, stopped short, but was vehemently urged to proceed by her interested little auditor.

"You worry Miss Hope as cruelly as the wolf did little Red Riding-Hood. Suppose I try to tell you a story now to relieve her?"

"A pretty story, uncle Richard? But can *you* tell one?"

"Not half so well as Miss Hope; but if I might be allowed, I would fain try. Ask Miss Hope if I may venture to tell you an old story."

"Can you tell about 'a king and a queen, as in many lands have been;' or a great, big giant; or Cinderella and her little glass slipper?"

"Something better than all these, my little niece. My story, if I dare have the presumption to tell it, is about a pretty little girl who lived long, long ago; and her name was Charlotte."

"O, my!—yes, tell," cried Charlotte the little.

"But was she a pretty little girl, that Charlotte?"

"Very pretty."

"And a good girl, uncle?"

"Very good, and sweet-tempered, and affectionate."

"Tell! tell!" cried the impatient listener, disposing herself on Charlotte's knee to serious attention.

"Long, long ago, and longer than I *dare* tell," said Captain Spencer, gravely, and taking his niece's hand, "a pretty little girl, whose name was Charlotte, lived with her own good papa; and, one day, a young gentleman, to whom her papa had been very kind when he was a poor, forlorn, little *middy*, came to visit him"——

"At his castle, uncle?—and out came a great, ugly giant, uncle?"

"No, Charlotte,—only a sweet little girl came out; and she crept up to the young gentleman, and he loved her very much; and she was such an affectionate little girl, that she loved him very much too."

"Was he a pretty gentleman, uncle?" inquired little Charlotte.

"Faith, I fear I cannot say much for his beauty," said Captain Spencer, laughing.

"Was he a good gentleman, godmother?"

"O! very good, I daresay," said Charlotte the elder, smiling and blushing slightly, "though I am sure I don't know."

Little Charlotte looked now extremely sensible, and logically propounded, as old Martha's opinion, that "a good, little girl was far better than a pretty one; and so it held of a gentleman."

"I am glad of old Martha's suffrage for plain gentlemen," resumed Captain Spencer; "and now for my tale. So this pretty little girl and the young gentleman loved each other very much."

"That was right to love. Mamma says that, uncle; and what did he do then?"

"I shall tell you. One day sweet little Charlotte says archly to him, as did another little girl in a pretty story-book that I have read, 'I would kiss *ou*, sir, if *ou* would *ask* me.'"

The comic face and baby tones of her uncle delighted the younger Charlotte.

"O my! my!" she again cried, quivering her limbs in ecstacy; "such a funny story, godmother."

"O fie, fie!" cried the elder Charlotte, stooping her blushing face on the little neck of her playmate. "What a pert little dame she must have been, that said so to the gentleman."

"Not pert,—a pretty little Charlotte. Tell uncle!" cried the child, as impatient as the gods of a noisy theatre, when the scene has been postponed a second beyond the time allowed by their sovereign pleasure.

"And long, long afterwards," continued Captain Spencer, more hastily, and kissing the little hand he held to cover his confusion, "the gentleman returned again."—"The *young* gentleman," corrected little Charlotte, and her uncle smiled at her quickness.—"And pretty little Charlotte was grown very big now,—a tall, beautiful young lady."

"As big as that?" said little Charlotte, holding out her hand.

"As big as all that," said Captain Spencer, his hand hovering for a second in demonstration over Miss Hope's brown curls. She half rose, but this movement was sturdily opposed by the indulged

goddaughter, who insisted that she should hear out "uncle Richard's beautiful story."

"Well, you remember what the little girl said?"

"O yes, the little girl said, '*me would kiss ou*,'" and little Charlotte, smiling and looking very knowing, kissed her godmother, and hid her face playfully in her bosom.

"So said the gentleman when he came back," continued Captain Spencer; "and he was sadly afraid too,—'*me* would kiss *ou* now, if *ou* would let *me*.'"

"O my stars, uncle!—how funny, godmother. And what did big Charlotte, the beautiful young lady, say then?"

"Miss Hope must be so good as tell you the rest of it. Perhaps she said, 'Go about your business, you impudent old rogue,—do you presume to hope that a charming, beautiful girl like me, would look at a rough, weather-beaten old Trunnion such as you, forsooth!'"

"Bad girl! naughty, wicked girl!" cried little Charlotte emphatically, and she looked shocked and indignant at the supposed rude answer. "I

would tell my mamma, and she would whip her, and make her"—and she shook her little hand.

"I don't think," said the elder Charlotte, smiling and blushing more deeply than before, from failing in an attempt to raise her eyes to meet the anxious gaze of the storyteller, "I don't think she could have been so very ill-bred as to say all that to the gentleman."

"O no," cried the relieved little Charlotte,—"pretty girl would say, 'you are a good, kind old gentleman, and I will kiss *ou*, and love *ou* very much.'"

"Was this the answer?" cried Captain Spencer, half-forgetting his assumed character. "Dear Miss Hope, was this that charming, beloved girl's answer?"

"This becomes too absurd," said Charlotte, still smiling, but now fairly rising to go away. Captain Spencer caught her hand. "Durst I but hope the lovely girl said, 'I will try'"——

"Nay, Charlotte and you must frame the little girl's answer so as to please yourselves; the dancers are up,—I am waited for, I perceive, at the pianoforte."

"If it were but left to that," whispered Captain Spencer, catching his little niece, and looking unutterable things at Charlotte the elder, ere he suddenly half stifled the younger Charlotte with kisses. His suppressed raptures told Miss Hope how far her words might be strained, but to retract them at this time was impossible.

Miss Pitman, from afar, was looking so sharply over her cards, that Kate Stanley adroitly danced in between her and the view she took of Charlotte and Captain Spencer, and kept pirouetting and skipping there, calling to Charlotte to give her music. Five minutes tired both the dancing nymph and the musician. They went up stairs at the same time.

"I see you look fresh from mischief, and after more to-night, Miss Kate Stanley," said Miss Hope.

"I *saw* you are fresh from mischief, and after more to-night, Miss Charlotte Hope," returned the hoyden; "and so did Pitman,—Captain Spencer kissing baby for love of nurse,—eh, cousin Charlotte?"

"Let me assure you, Catherine, that if you pre-

same to torment Miss Pitman with more of your rude jokes, you shall quickly be sent where better manners may be taught you," replied Charlotte, in some confusion.

"I suppose nobody must torment any body in this house, save yourself, Charlotte. You know that both Ned and I hate that odious Pitman,—for your sake too, hate her,—as prying as a magpie, as spiteful as a cat, and as old-fashioned as Queen Bess; but our malice now only goes to get her a good husband, what she has been so long hunting for herself,—and to send her from this house, where her back, I know, is the most admired view of her person."

"You have already deeply offended Mrs. Seymour by your ill-bred tricks to Miss Pitman."

"She smiles though,—Mr. Seymour laughs, and so do you—*almost*, cousin Charlotte," said Kate in a coaxing voice.

"I should be ashamed of myself could I laugh at rude jests, wanton mischief, and vulgar practical jokes."

"Or at any mischief, save of your own making," said the shrewd hoyden. "Don't be offended,

Charlotte,—after this one night I shall never do any one thing to displease you, were it but to pull the cat's tail."

"Nay, after this minute, Kate."

"Impossible, Charlotte, my honour is pledged to Miss Smith and Ned;—but I dare not let you into the secret."

"No, Miss Hope was never yet made the confidante of a disgraceful secret," said Mrs. Seymour, who followed them up stairs, carrying her little daughter. Kate ran off, and the ladies entered Mrs. Seymour's dressing-room.

"A compliment to my judgment, at the expense of my good-nature, Sophia: I must surely be a very repelling person. I am everybody's bride-maid, but no one ever yet told me a true love-story, or chose me confidante in any fond, foolish affair, whether of head or heart."

"I wish, Charlotte, you would make up your mind to have one fond, foolish secret of Captain Spencer's confided to both your head and heart."

"But, alas!" said Charlotte, "he has no

'Follies of the wise to reveal.'"

"A few fears of the brave though, perchance," returned Mrs. Seymour. "Poor Richard's insuperable modesty"——

Charlotte laughed aloud with all her characteristic merriment, and Mrs. Seymour looked perplexed at the interruption.

"This magpie was beginning to tell me some wild story of 'uncle Richard' when she fell asleep; let me, I beg of you, Charlotte, find you here when I have carried her to the nurse." The lady went off, and on her almost immediate return found Charlotte in a fit of most unwonted thoughtfulness.

"What brooding over, my dear Charlotte? I am all anxiety."

"Over the wrecks of that 'insuperable modesty' of Captain Spencer's, which you have so often commemorated, Sophia. There is indeed no fathoming the cunning or art of some men. Something as like a declaration as 'insuperable modesty' could venture has been made, yet not made"——

"My dearest Charlotte! and has Richard really found courage; and surely, Charlotte, my love, you

who have so long known his worth ;—but I won't doubt. Seymour will be so happy! My cup is too full!—so many dear blessings, and this added to crown them all."

"Nay, you won't weep, Sophia," whined Charlotte, laughing again, yet in evident emotion. "Small danger of too much happiness in this life. If Captain Spencer has made love to me at all—for I could not sue for damages in any court, from all that has yet passed, having no witness save little Charlotte,—surely, of the thousand and one ways of telling a threadbare story, his was the most ingenious, odd, and—impudent almost :—to upbraid me with my juvenile imprudences! Sophia—conceive the indelicacy of that."

"Poor soul, you know men are sometimes impudent from very bashfulness. I daresay, but for the sound fright Sir Reginald gave him to-day, and the terror of finding you, in spite of all my cares, Lady or Mrs. Something on his next return, Richard would not have summoned courage to have spoken yet. His painful, humiliating consciousness of all his deficiencies ; his years, and scars, and mutilated limbs"——

"Nonsense, Sophia, who ever thought of the years and scars of those they love, save to love them the more for their years and scars. Afraid to address me?—And his *innocent* bashfulness too! —I could smile at that."

"Don't laugh at him, Charlotte—I cannot bear it at present. I have long perceived the secret conflict; and for some time seen the 'threadbare story,' as you call it, trembling on the very tip of the tongue, and frozen there; and what is more, so did you."

"I do confess I did at times fancy the mountain was seized with its throes; but the affair was so tedious that, as I am neither of the age nor condition to act *sage femme*, I resolved to wait with patience till I saw the mouse fairly produced without my aid."

"And now you have both seen and heard?"

"Heard a nursery-tale:—no, no—he must speak out."

Charlotte rose, and shook out her flounces. "Nonsense! to tell me Captain Spencer fears to hail anything carrying sail, unless

'It looms like a French man-of-war.'

No, no, he must, like the brave man he is, say, 'Charlotte Hope, or Miss Hope, or Miss Charlotte Hope, will you be so very kind, gracious, and condescending, as take me for your lord and master?' What is the odious style of it, Sophia?"

There was a gentle knock on the door. "Then here he comes to say it all for himself, my Charlotte," cried Mrs. Seymour. "Let go my hands, pray; you could not suppose I was to deny my own brother the same indulgence I procured for a stranger to-day, especially as he so earnestly implored me. I forgot to inform you of his request; but, indeed, after what has been said, the sooner all is said the better."

"O, my! my!" cried Charlotte, adopting her little namesake's favourite nursery exclamation. "I did not think the giant would have come to snatch me up till to-morrow morning. Don't you stir for your life. This is worse to me than all Ned Stanley's hobgoblins."

"Ay, Charlotte, your courage quells at last, my dear," said her smiling friend. "Let go my hands —coming, sir! You are glad to cling to *me* now, with all your boasted courage."

"Don't vaunt, Sophia; I can do all that may become a maid!" and Charlotte threw the protecting hands of her friend from her. "But, seriously, be back in five minutes, if you will go. I am, I own, *queerish*, sea-sick—a very little. And be sure, meanwhile, you bring Kate Stanley, and the romping squad to order. They have some wild device afloat to-night against poor Miss Pitman."

Mrs. Seymour's thoughts were otherwise occupied. She went to seek her husband, who was as much rejoiced at what probably took a small fortune out of his family, as if it had brought a large one into it. Mr. Seymour had the true English way of signalizing his joy, so he wished to give a good dinner. It was too late for this day, but his complacent wife promised the next best, if not higher indulgence, of a comfortable, *sitting*, fireside, *dining-room* supper; and he, on his part, promised to be as secret as the grave, and to spare Charlotte the tittering and whispering of the circle for at least that night. To-morrow the joyful tidings were to be sent abroad on all the winds of heaven, or rather by all the mail coaches in England, among Charlotte Hope's numerous friends and connexions.

When supper was announced, Mr. Seymour went up stairs in search of Charlotte, privately to pay his congratulations, and to promise secrecy.—"No restraint on yourself, cousin John, for my sake; you know if you keep—that is supposing you were able to keep, your mouth shut, your secret would jump out by the eyes; if you closed them it would out in a fit of sneezing; and if every avenue were stopped, ooze from your finger-ends. I shall eat my supper quite composedly, though all the world knew that I was Captain Spencer's betrothed."

"Ay, my saucy heroine, and is this your opinion of my powers of secrecy? Have a better opinion of my sagacity. However, I was sure, that, with your sense and courage, you would have the honest frankness not to seem ashamed of becoming an honest man's wife, and I told Sophia so."

"You rate my courage too highly, and boast of it too much, cousin John. I can, for instance, be, as my Scotch cousins say, so *eerie* at times, in those long gloomy passages of yours—the veriest coward."

"I have been very tedious, sir," said Miss Pembroke, pausing here, "but poor Mrs. Seymour has told me all this so very often, and dwelt on it so circumstantially."

A love story, if genuine, can never be tedious, my dear Miss Pembroke, I replied; besides this happy wooing was not long a-doing."

"There was not a particle of prudery about Charlotte, sir. Pride she had in the proper degree. On this night the tittering of the juvenile guests, made her affect higher spirits than she probably felt, till the fiction became reality. She had, poor thing, attained the highest spoke of Fortune's wheel, and probably, even her steady head might for a few minutes feel giddy.

"Mr. Seymour's was a very happy supper-party —ominously happy. Mr. Edward Stanley was in wild spirits, pouring forth repartees, bon-mots, puns, and extemporary verses, without infringing on Mr. Seymour's capital stories, and choice hunting songs.—I don't believe he has ever sung since, sir," said my informant, "but that night he would not be restrained."

"You get quite boisterously and *vulgarly* merry,

good folks," said Mrs. Seymour, all serene joy herself, "and it gets late."

"As merry, Sophia, as if this were a bridal eve. Come Brightest and Best! Richard has never heard us sing any of our catches together. 'Flow thou regal purple stream.' That won't suit you though. Well, 'Bright Phœbus,'—come Charlotte."

"Better fitted to your whipper-in to-morrow morning, than me to-night, John," said Charlotte; nevertheless she joined the old chorus, and sung with spirit and cheerfulness, the hunting ditty to which the clear, jocund voice of Mr. Seymour gave such effect. In singing the last stanza, she rose, pointed to the time-piece on the mantle-shelf, which now pointed to one, lighted her taper at the sideboard, bowed a goodnight round and round; and ere Captain Spencer had reached the door to open it for her, "the Phantom of delight" had vanished in song. He heard her voice die away in the distant passages, still singing the hunting chorus.

"Stay, Charlotte, for my 'Friar of orders grey,'" chanted Mr. Seymour, but the ladies had now all risen.

Mr. Seymour was just beginning to taste the "sweet of the night." He knew Ned Stanley was staunch, and had hopes of Captain Spencer. He whispered his wife, "I say, Sophia, drop Pitman and the rest, and bring back Charlotte and Kate, for one half-hour, or ten minutes:—do bring them —there is a good wife;—we will make such a snug thing of it among ourselves."

"Ah, sir," said Miss Pembroke, "if Mrs. Seymour had but gratified this seemingly foolish request at which she only smiled. I have seen her weep this fatal observance of propriety. There was indeed a marked fatality, a combination of untoward circumstances to produce one dreadful event.

"Charlotte, before going to her chamber, ran up stairs to see how her little goddaughter, after a feverish day, looked in her sleep; and by this means met Miss Pitman in the passage, followed by the whole Comus rout of girls. Miss Pitman and she had their chambers in the same gallery. The young romps ran off with Miss Pitman's candle; and Charlotte, indignant at their rudeness, gave the offended lady her own taper, saying she did

not mind light; her fire, which Martha always had in excellent order, was enough for her, and she did not choose to trouble the servants.

"The disappearance of the ladies from the dining-room, removed the seal from Mr. Seymour's lips."

"What a sailor's wife Charlotte will make!" cried he. "Fill your glass, Ned, don't mind Captain Spencer's odd ways; he is on duty."

"I'll drink the toast that I know is coming, were it a mile to the bottom," cried young Stanley. "Who owes half as much to Miss Charlotte Hope as I do?"

Captain Spencer looked keenly at the young man.

"May I tell *it*, Mr. Seymour?—it does me good to tell *it*—warms and expands my heart."

"You are a good-for-something lad, after all, Ned; so I'll spare your blushes, and tell your tale for you, lest Richard be jealous. It is a tale of what ten thousand women might have been generous enough to wish, but what Charlotte Hope alone could have accomplished. You must know, that our excellent cousin Ned here, had, we won't say how, got himself into certain scrapes at

Cambridge, which brought him into utter disgrace with his uncle, and, what is worse, placed him in the power of his uncle's managing lady. Instead of facing the matter out, Mr. Edward chose to skulk. Ruin and infamy were about to overwhelm him, merely from his want of courage and candour, —for his faults were those of a boy:—his honour, his future prospects, his peace, all depended on Charlotte secretly conveying to him certain intelligence which she had obtained, and inducing him to face his angry relatives the very next day. She was then living in his uncle's family. After midnight her hasty letter was written; long after midnight, and just in time to save the post, she walked alone to the post-office of the neighbouring town, a distance of three miles, through a deep, dark wood, —and a lonely burying-ground; and having safely deposited her warning letter, flew back like a lapwing. This act may seem trifling to some persons; a woman only—with the fears and delicacies of a refined woman's habits—can estimate its merit. I confess I think her courage was marvellous,—going up to a breach was nothing.—Charlotte says her courage never failed in going; in

turning she was startled by a light rising in a cottage window, and by every leaf stirring in her path. Her bold walk saved her worshipful cousin there, who—

> ' A wiser and a better man,
> Arose to-morrow's morn.' "

" My noble cousin!" said Stanley,—" I was a mere boy then; I had been very foolish, and some of my connexions, ' more than kin, and less than kind,' wished, I believe, to drive me desperate. I could not have found courage to face them, merely to save myself; but I was impelled to my uncle's house, to learn that no evil or alarm had overtaken heroic Charlotte in her homeward walk through the wood and across the common. There she was, looking but the fresher for the night-air:—all was explained on her interference, and forgiven on her intercession. She became surety for my future wisdom; and I think even my aunt can accuse me of no gross outbreak since. So thus I pledge Miss Charlotte Hope—Mrs. Richard Spencer, that shall be.—I'll drain this bumper were it deep as the crater of Vesuvius."

The gentlemen almost immediately retired together, and separated in the passages.

Captain Spencer, on his onward progress, first heard a tittering, and next descried Kate Stanley, with Miss Smith and her sister, endeavouring to conceal themselves. They were joined by Edward Stanley—when the whole group advanced on tip-toe, to Miss Pitman's chamber door, at which they appeared to listen for a few seconds; and then separating, they glided away as if to their respective apartments. It was evident that they were engaged in some foolish jest, of which Miss Pitman was the object. Captain Spencer, had some design to call Mr. Stanley to him, to explain this pantomime, but figures and lights hastily disappeared, as if the jesters dreaded discovery; and placing his light in his own chamber, he went on to the far end of the corridor, to reconnoitre, and paused an instant by Miss Hope's door. She now occupied, as he understood, the chamber which had first been his sister's. There was a faint streak of light proceeding from under the door, as if cast forth by an expiring fire. Blessing the sleeping inmate, and probably congratulating himself on the near approach of the period when he might claim the happy privilege of entering this chamber, he in-

voluntarily touched the handle of the door, the last object touched by the fair and taper fingers of Charlotte, when he heard her voice, as if singing in a low veiled voice; and in greater trepidation, lest his nocturnal watch should be detected, than if a French fleet had borne down on his single 74, he hastily retreated to his room.

The tumult of his previous feelings, and the flood of new-born thought, were unfavourable to sleep; and as Captain Spencer had much business before him on the following day, he resolved to leave his sleepless couch, and employ himself in writing to his lawyer, about the simple arrangement of his marriage settlements. He knew that a night-lamp always burnt near the door of the nursery, one of the whims of Sophia, as he thought, but useful to him now, and thither he cautiously proceeded to light his candle. Again he involuntarily paused by Charlotte's door, for though three hours had elapsed, the same monotonous music was still heard within—the chorus of the hunting song, so lately sung by herself and Mr. Seymour, now warbled in a sort of broken chant, low, wild, querulous, and irregular. Nor though this was

her chamber door, could he fancy these the joyous, clear, bird-like tones of Charlotte Hope's voice.

He hovered about the spot for a few minutes and still at intervals there came from the same point, the same wild moaning strain, as if in fearful mockery of music, resembling melody no more than does the maniac's yelling laugh the burst of heart-felt, natural merriment. His uneasiness, ridiculous as its cause seemed, became extreme. He even resolved to summon his sister;—then came the fear of John Seymour's laugh,—of Charlotte's displeasure, of the violation of the propriety doubly incumbent on himself at this season.

"It was, alas! in all probability, the only time in his life, in which Captain Spencer ever acted with indecision," said Miss Pembroke. "But the chain of fatality was complete in all its links. His next fancy was, that Charlotte, like himself, was not yet in bed, but somehow engaged within her room; and that this wild under-song might be the accompaniment of her midnight labours—so alas! it was."

Captain Spencer had written his letters; two more hours were past, the grey winter's dawn

broke, and a few pale, ineffectual rays of light now struggled down the long corridor, where he once more assumed more anxious watch; for still was heard that wild song,—ever, ever the same monotonous hum, though, as the daylight strengthened, there came, as he fancied, an occasional startling burst of stifled sound, sinking into a low, faint, unsteady moan. Then suddenly rose the wilder swell of shrill, discordant, and almost yelling notes, thrilling through all his pulses, as if his nerves were chords strung to the same key,—and he flew to his sister's chamber.

"Awake, Sophia!—O God! Sophia, does Miss Hope never sleep?—does Charlotte sing all night long like a maniac?"

"Good Heavens! Richard, how you terrify me! are you a maniac to put such a question?—her slumbers are serene as those of infancy."

"Come to your friend, Sophia," cried Richard Spencer, in a tone which made his sister tremble. "Come in all haste,"—and in less than a minute Mrs. Seymour and her husband were following him to Charlotte's door. Sophia shook it, called, knocked—in vain. Unheeding the voices without, all

low querulous strain was uniformly sustained in tones how ill in accordance with the bounding and joyous sweep of the hunting chorus!

"Richard,—John,—for Heaven's sake, force the door," cried Charlotte's friend, trembling in an agony of apprehension, and leaning against the wall. Captain Spencer, with desperate strength, burst open the door—Mrs. Seymour rushed in—and the brothers stood without, gazing on each other. They saw Mrs. Seymour dart towards the bed, and then throw the window shutters wider open.

The bed they could not see, it was placed behind the door, but they heard Sophia's dreadful scream, and rushed in together. She had fallen across the bed; and on the bed, in her white night-dress—her hair uncovered and dishevelled, mowing and grinning sat Charlotte Hope, one arm hugging to her bosom the hideous human skeleton which lay on her lap, the fingers of her other hand playing and twining through its shrunken sinews, as if she were touching the strings of her harp, in symphony with the hunting chorus—the "Hark away," which she still shrilled forth.

An involuntary cry of stifled, shuddering horror

and pity, here burst from Mr. Dodsley's young audience—the girls bent forward and clung to each other.

"I will not," said the Curate, "even attempt to describe the misery of the lover and the friends of Charlotte, or the agony of the perpetrators of this horrible catastrophe. It is a wretched palliation to say that the servant in their confidence mistook one lady's chamber for that of another.

"It was conjectured that the unfortunate young lady had been in bed, and in almost total darkness, before she discovered their barbarous trick, and that she might have been, at first, thrown into insensibility from extreme alarm, only to awake to deeper horror. Of course, all was conjecture,—miserable, distracting conjecture;—but oh! the certainty of the mortal agony which in one hour's space, or in one minute's, must have passed over the mind of this naturally firm and courageous girl."

The Curate, probably wishing to deepen the impression he made, now repeated with subdued emphasis—

> "O! if it look on me with its dead eyes!
> If it should move its lock'd and earthy lips,
> And utterance give to the grave's hollow sounds!

If it stretch forth its cold and bony grasp—
O! horror, horror!"

"Stop, stop, sir!" cried Sophia, "I cannot bear this."

"Nay, I have no wish to harrow you farther, my young friends. One other lesson we may however draw from my tale, to preserve the mind at all seasons in aptitude to implore strength above our own—in perpetual readiness to—

"Raise its thoughts in strong and steady fervour
To Him—the Lord of all existing things,
Who lives and is where'er existence is;—
Grasping its hold upon his skirted robe,
Beneath whose mighty rule, Angels and Spirits,
Demons and nether Powers, all living things,
Hosts of the earth, with the departed dead
In their dark state of mystery, alike
Subjected are!—

"It was," continued the Curate, "with humble thankfulness to Divine mercy, for her early deliverance from the most afflicting of mortal visitations, that the Seymours and Captain Spencer followed the corpse of their beloved Charlotte to the grave, about the same day when they might have expected to attend her a bride to the altar. Captain Spencer, immediately afterwards put to sea. He lives, and will probably die unmarried."

FASHION,

AND PERSONAL ORNAMENTS.

Mr. Dodsley was expected to dine at Hollycot one day, and had promised in the evening to exhibit the wonders of his Magic Lantern, for the amusement and instruction of the young circle. On the morning of that day, Mrs. Herbert received a long and elegantly periphrastical note from her neighbour, Mrs. Lydgate, the import of which, on interpretation into plain English, was to offer a visit from the Misses Lydgate, to Misses Sophia and Fanny Herbert, as she herself was compelled to be from home for some days, and "Mrs. Herbert," she wrote, "was aware how much she, trembling at every step in the progress of her daughters' education, dreaded for her *precious charges* the contamination *de la cuisine*." By this piece of French slip-slop, Mrs. Herbert did not exactly know whether her correspondent referred to the manners or clothes of the young

ladies; but she politely answered the note, and accepted the visit in the ordinary terms. Perhaps she might have regretted her freedom of speech, had she been aware that her own shrewd Fanny involuntarily overheard her saying to Miss Harding and Miss Ellis, "As my house is full of young people, we will feel the Lydgates less plague at this time, than if they came alone; for what on earth is so troublesome as ill-brought-up children;" and, perhaps, she might not have cared who heard her say so.

Sophia was desired to prepare some pleasant amusement for her young guests; but she said that she could imagine nothing more agreeable than Mr. Dodsley's promised exhibition; and when the ROUND-TABLE was encircled at night, with a garland of beaming faces, it was universally declared that nothing could be more delightful than the proposed exhibition of female ornaments and fashions, and the costumes of all countries, ancient and modern. Even Miss Lydgate vowed it must be charming, and she called the first subject,—

A modern Belle,—fashionable and dashing,—first in a magnificent court dress, then in a ball

dress at Almack's, fine and fantastic, waltzing with a partner equally fine and fashionable. Next in Hyde-park, in the carriage costume of the month, her admirer or attendant completely overshadowed by her broad, flat bonnet, which spread over her as wide as an ordinary umbrella.

"How elegant! how beautiful! *how perfectly fashionable!*" had been the frequent exclamation of Miss Lydgate.

"A true lady's climax," said Mr. Dodsley, laughing; "but here is our belle again—on the Steyne at Brighton,—in a walking-dress, short, very full flounced skirts,—pinched-in waist; and that enormous bonnet—all blonde, and ribbon, flowers, and trimmings. What can possess an Englishwoman to wear those deformities, those caps to catch wind, at least out of doors in our climate. The poor lady's person looks like a mushroom stem, her bonnet the broad top."

"Perfectly stylish!" was still the exclamation of Miss Lydgate. "I am certain this lady has her things from Madame Friponiere."—"Then those *boucles d'Angouleme*, give such a *jaunty*, finished air to the whole figure;" and Miss Emma uncon-

sciously lifted her hand, till it hovered over her own huge bows of hair. George Herbert winked to the Irish youth, Fanny laughed, and Sophia frowned at their ill-breeding.

"And those sweet sleeves, and *les mancherons*. There is the *gigot* that *was* so beautiful, now *l'imbecile* is newest. Then the crimson *corsage*, and—that *love* of a hat—what do *you* think, Sophia?" The young lady meanwhile perused Miss Jane Harding's dress, which was of new and undoubted orthodox, London West-end fashion. That could not be gainsaid, or Miss Lydgate was very willing to doubt.

"I cannot admire *l'imbecile* in any thing," said Sophia, laughing; "not even in sleeves—at least not yet. I think the dress you now look at—my aunt Jane's—perfectly elegant:—her dress is so at all times. It always becomes the wearer so well—looks so handsome and substantial, as well as fashionable; and always fits her so admirably well, while it never has any thing staring or particular about it."

"If I may believe you, Sophia, I hit the exact happy medium in dress and fashion. I must, how-

ever, remember, in my humility, that you are but a young and rustic admirer, and have, I fear, as yet more of taste, universal, elemental taste, than of limited, arbitrary, fashionable taste. I must try you. Do you like even my enormous hat?—my late Parisian gift, which I wore last night to astonish and amuse Miss Ellis."

"Miss Ellis was much amused with it; and I—I fear I began to think it was pretty;—so *debonair*,—and a lady looks, as Emma says, so *jaunty*, and graceful, or rather so French-like under those broad-leaved hats; then the materials are so gay and delicate, and it looks so light; and those flowing, long, rich strings:—besides, it reminds one of the bread foliage we see in prints, decorating and screening the heads of the females in tropical countries,—those beautiful, far-spreading leaves of palms or palmettos."

"I fear, Sophia, with all your *soes*, and poetical analogies, you are as much under the despotism of the Proteus fashion as your neighbours," said her aunt.

"Right, that Sophia and all young and old ladies should give to Fashion what from them is

Fashion's due," said Mrs. Herbert; "and I own I shall be glad to learn where she thinks lawful, graceful subjection to the Mode ends, and where slavery commences. Remember, Sophia, that there is no tyranny in England,—Fashion can levy no tribute, but with the English girl's free consent."

"How beautiful you thought my crimson and gold turban, Sophia," said her aunt.

"That turban which I would have had you wear all day, and every day," returned Sophia,—"which I was so proud to wear for ten minutes, while you were dressing; and which I mounted a chair to declaim a speech in to grandmamma,—to be sure I was a great fool:—but *that turban—then*—the single jewel in front, as if holding the folds together,—was the most grand, oriental, and picturesque-looking head-dress that could be imagined. I shall ever admire a *real* turban."

"When it is in fashion, you mean."

"No, at all times,—provided it be a *real* turban, not an inverted mouse-trap of stiff muslin or gauze."

"If well put on too," said Miss Harding,—"suiting the style of the wearer's beauty or ugliness,—low on the brow, resting on rich, braided,

dark locks, above a dark eye, deep set or full, and a rich olive complexion; no roses and lilies, nor fair, drooping ringlets under the gorgeous head-dress of *man* in the East. But over and above all let turbans be fashionable,—or to the lumber-garret with them."

"Nay, still leave them to the painters, Miss Harding," said the Curate.

"O, surely!—and French *tocques* for us, Miss Lydgate."

"Ha! very handsome!" cried Miss Lydgate, looking earnestly at the next figure, which was adorned with a *tocque* of true Parisian involution: —and then there was exhibited a variety of those high, fantastic-looking caps, which, in this country, go by the generic name of French caps,—all *tulle* and *blonde*, *bows* and *flowers*.

"The exact pattern of mamma's last London cap," cried Miss Lydgate; "very handsome indeed."

"Oh! those odious high caps," cried Sophia; "I thought them so ugly when I saw them first,—and those wings they have got now, out at the sides like a dragon-fly in flight! It is so provok-

ing how taste slides round. I really don't think them half so ugly as I did; and I fear I would think flat caps so odd this year—on all save Miss Ellis:—I never saw her alter the style of her dress, and I never thought her unfashionable, or odd,—no, always *propriety* in her dress, and often elegance."

"Then which of all our modern belles do you admire the most, ladies?" inquired Mr. Dodsley. "And, gentlemen, which do you?"

"O, the first, by all means," was the general cry. "That dashing woman of fashion."

"She was quite as decided, if not so *pronounced* a fashionable, and more of a beauty, about twenty years ago, my dears.—That is the celebrated Lady Anne ———; twenty years ago she was this slight, lovely, fair girl of seventeen."

"Such a dowdy fright!" cried Miss Lydgate. "Goodness! could ever those short waists,—no waists—no shape at all, have been fashionable!—and a white frock—a shroud rather, pinned tight round the figure,—no flounce or trimming, or fullness!—a back the size of sixpence, and sleeves so tight. Just look at the fright, Miss Sophia. That

chip hat, the size of a pincushion, with flat puffs of lilac ribbon." Sophia looked and could not approve. The face, she said, was lovely; but the dress so pinched and awkward,—and the small bonnet,—and no freedom, no drapery.

"Ah! Sophia,—fashion, fashion!" said her aunt, smiling and shaking her head. "Those light yet luxuriant curls of fair hair, you must allow, are graceful, though not like the hard, massy bows of this day."

"Nor yet like the long, fair drooping ringlets of this day," retorted Sophia.

"So becoming to a youthful, blooming, fair beauty," said Mrs. Herbert; "but long, silky ringlets shading a faded cheek,—alas!—yes, Miss Lydgate, they order these things better in France. There is an age in England as well as in France, at which ladies would do well to roll up their tresses into those hard but dignified '*boucles d'Angouleme*,' whatever fashion may dictate. But let me have a peep of the belle of twenty years back. I am unwilling to think so disparagingly of my own youthful costume."

"My veritable self," continued the lady, laughing, as she looked at the figure,—"in my very pride of days—the dress my sister Clements and myself wore on the excursion to Windsor, Jane told you about, before either of us were married; very fine we thought ourselves, to be sure—and so I hope did you, brother Clements, for you were of the party,—look at your wife, sir."

"How excessively absurd that figure appears now—that dress I mean," said Mr. Clements; "yet then."—"Ay, then," rejoined the lady, "that was called a curricle robe and petticoat; there was no trimming, but I know well there was much work about it, for many a weary stitch it cost me. Those little things of chip were called *Vittoria* hats, or some such name, as we say a *Ramillies* wig, or a *Steenkirk* cravat. I believe we must have worn kid boots and gloves of a colour to match our ribbons and scarfs; some ladies wore feathers, I daresay,—veils were then less in use. So you don't like the fashion of the beginning of this century, Sophia?"

"A veil would have given some folds—some relief," said Sophia, evading the question, and un-

willing to own herself the slave of changing fashion.

"Of all pieces of female dress, the *veil*, and next in order, the shawl, mantle, or scarf, are the most graceful," said Mr. Dodsley; "in one mode or other the most universal too. The rudest feelings of nature, stern necessity, dictate *clothes*,—gowns and petticoats of skins, or of the coarsest stuffs; but the first advances in civilization, the first labours of Minerva, invested the female form with the modest and graceful drapery of the veil, a sure symbol of progressive delicacy and refinement.

"My exhibition is rich in veils," he continued; "I don't however, Miss Jane, mean exactly the gauze curtains which you ladies hang round your bonnets, useful as these may be, but the real, flowing, graceful veil, falling in folds from the head, even into a royal train—as here." The picture exhibited was Mary Queen of Scots, leading out to her execution, —an ample black veil falling round her person.

"But I like the *feminine* veil in all forms, whether worn by princess or peasant maid," continued the Curate. "This picture represents a Highland girl in her 'tartan screen,' plaid, or veil,

worn modestly over her head, and falling in front in full folds, almost to her feet." Sophia named this figure Jeanie Deans.

There were next seen in succession a Hebrew and Turkish female, veiled; a Carmelite nun; a Hindoo girl in a spangled veil. Then the "high-browed *dama*" of Spain, who wears the *mantilla* of her country no less frequently than does the peasant maid. Then appeared Italian ladies, their simple head-dress abroad in the summer-evening promenade, a muslin veil thrown over their hair.

"These are Genoese females of the present day. How much more elegant is this cheap, simple garniture, than, for instance, those odious hats, or caps of Berne, which were, however, truly Parisian fifty years ago."

"A caricature of the most ugly of exploded French fashions," said Miss Harding, looking at the Bernoise female.

"Shew us more veils, if you have them, pray, sir," said Sophia. "You see how impudent ladies become when examining finery."

"Here is the Greek veil,—the veil of the Roman lady. I will shew you that of the Jewish lady

when we come to examine the toilets of the *elegantes* of the ancient world. I have only hitherto shewed you the veil as part of national garb, not as an article of fashionable dress. Then you must have the bride's veil, the most becoming of her ornaments; and a most beautiful scene, 'The taking of the veil.'"

Miss Lydgate yawned aloud. "I am afraid, sir," said Mrs. Herbert, "you are reviewing dress as a philosopher, and Sophia listening as a *would-be* poet and artist. Now, we, the rest of your audience, whether young or old English ladies, or incipient dandies, have other thoughts. Mine, for instance, though I wish my daughters to dress well, and consequently to understand dress, are, that this same clothing or *fashion*, besides being considered for its own dear sake, must be seriously thought about, as what devours, in middle life, a full fourth, or even third of our entire incomes—a very serious matter. 'The judicious few,' in which number I place all your audience, sir, know that dress and fashion are certain fluctuating somethings, that must be attended to in this British world, with prudence and honesty, with propriety also, and

good taste, which, I daresay, in all cases of fashion, may be called a finer sense of propriety. Honest people will not dress beyond their means; those who have a correct sense of propriety will, as it were instinctively, suit their appearance to their age, figure, rank, and locality. Good taste is shewn in being really well, and also fashionably dressed—neither leading the bold van, nor yet, equally vain, but more undecided, or more fearful of ridicule, lagging in the rear of the disappearing Fashion; ever panting after her in vain; entering by one of her stage doors, while she whisks out at the other side; taking up with the tawdry counterfeit she has left behind, to cheat the vulgar, while she deftly changes her garb;—tardily pursuing her, and finding ourselves again thrown out, as the changeful goddess bursts forth in a quite new form.—But sights are better than sounds. Sights, then, if you please, sir!"

"I am rather thrown out too," said the showman. "I meant to have shewn off Mrs. Herbert's contemporary of twenty years ago, Beau Brummel, with no more plaits or folds in his coat than were in her curricle robe. Here, however, in the mean-

while, is a figure, a picture of quiet, neutral tints, that must ever please some of you."

Miss Lydgate, expecting perhaps to see some wondrous *belle*, drew back from the view in cold surprise and disdain, but said nothing.

"A Quaker lady! our Miss Ellis!" cried Sophia. "O! thank you, sir!—Look, aunt Jane! The smooth, fair brow, and the little gleam of bright, braided hair seen under that clear, close cap; and the short, clear apron, and the lawn kerchief crossed under that silver-grey, tight-fitting, silk gown, open in front, and shewing a little the clear muslin petticoat, with its narrow, nicely-plaited frill. Look at her, mamma! Look at her George!"—and every one looked at "clear," "pure," Miss Ellis, though not with the eyes of Sophia; who, when she got back the picture, exclaimed, "Why do I never think her unfashionable? Is it because her eyes are so smiling and dove-like?—or is it because I love her so dearly?"

"Not quite so," said Mrs. Herbert. "You love Miss Ellis, doubtless; but you also think her, if not fashionably, at least very well—very *properly* dressed."

"O, mamma!"

"Truth, notwithstanding your deprecating looks, Sophia. Why should it be otherwise? you never saw her, save in this plain garb—the most elegant a Quaker lady can wear; besides, it reminds you of Holbein's pictures, or of those of some of the Flemish masters. You like this plain garb, as you do the robes of a judge, the coif of an ancient village gammer, or the vestments of a bishop, whom you would be shocked to see attired like a modern, fine gentleman."

"Old Eldon, a *swell* of the first head in Bond Street," said young Consadine, aside to his companions. "Or in the Park, eh? with Hoby's and quizzing-glass."

"My mother does not understand *slang*," said George Herbert, coldly.

"Then, mamma, I find there are two ways of judging of dress and fashions," resumed Sophia.

"Hundreds of ways, Sophia; there are two by which you already judge; but we interrupt the exhibition."

"Before we proceed farther in our illustrations, young ladies and gentlemen," said the Curate, "it

may be proper to point out the origin of fashions in dress and ornament, independently of that copious source, the temptations of tailors and milliners, and the flatteries of courtiers and abigails. Most of our really ugly, fantastic fashions, owe their invention to the personal deformity of some great man or woman.

"See here! you have all heard of *patching*—some of you have read the papers in the Spectator ridiculing this absurd fashion. This lady was a foreigner—a Frenchwoman there is little doubt—who lived in England in the reign of Edward the VI. She first used one patch, there it is—it covers a wen on her neck; and the fashion spread, till in the reign of Queen Anne patches became badges of party, as well as embellishments of complexion. In like manner, full-bottomed periwigs were invented to conceal the high shoulder of a French Prince. You must all have read or heard of that most inconvenient, as well as most fantastic of all fashions, shoes with long points,—even two feet long, and fastened with chains to the knee, to enable the wearer to shuffle along. Look here! this represents the inventor, Henry Plantagenet, Duke

of Anjou, who contrived this shoe to cover an excrescence on his own foot. The foot of the Chinese beauty, squeezed from infancy till it resemble the foot of a goat, may be more painful to look at, but is not more absurd than the peaked shoes of the age of the Plantagenets. In connexion with these same Plantagenets, I may give you another illustration of the power of fashion. Eleanor, the Queen of Louis the VII., had a true woman's eye for fashion; when that monarch was commanded, as a penance, to shave his beard and hair,—those most magnificent points in fashion's code, as nothing else pertaining to the human form, save teeth and nails, can either be cherished to unnatural growth or yet conveniently mutilated,—when the poor King cropped his hair, (which by the way became very fashionable among us about thirty years ago,) Eleanor despised and ridiculed him. She was divorced, and married Henry II. The dowry was the rich provinces of Poitou and Guienne,—'and this,' says a curious author, 'was the origin of the wars which ravaged France for three hundred years, and cost the French three millions of men; all which might never have occurred, had Louis

VII. not been so rash as to crop his head and shave his beard, by which he became disgustful in the eyes of our Queen Eleanor.' Other fashions, which though not always either modest or delicate, have generally been elegant and becoming, have been introduced to shew off peculiar beauties of person in men and women. Thus, fine skins or complexions give us uncovered bosoms; beautiful hair, some new arrangement of tresses; or well-turned ancles, very short petticoats; and thus, ugly, absurd fashions are introduced by deformed and cunning, but powerful persons,—elegant and indecorous ones, by persons of distinguished beauty. And so fashions run and rage,—and plain or clumsy women think that by adopting them—by uncovering the sallow neck, or displaying the sandy locks, they shall become lovely and attractive. Lord Byron, for example, had a throat of fine contour; —in very questionable taste for an English gentleman, he chose to exhibit it bare, though only abroad I believe. Here is 'the Childe,' as he is affectedly termed:—how noble is the outline of his head!—how finely the cheek is rounded off into

that beautiful chin, resting on his hand!—and here, forsooth, his fashion-struck imitator!"

The young gentleman who had eagerly gazed on the effigy of Byron, exclaimed in contempt and indignation,—"A puppy of a Sunday apprentice, exposing his *lanky* neck, indeed."

"Yes," said the Curate, "the youth is impelled by the irresistible impulse of fashion. And yet 'young Edwin was no vulgar boy;' if he had, he would have selected his model from the boards or boxes of the Haymarket or Surrey Theatres, or from Hyde-park, instead of imitating Byron."

"And that is Byron!" said Miss Lydgate. "Mamma saw him at a rout; the company thought he would never come, but he came at last. That dress might do for an exhibition picture, or a fancy-ball, but not for a nobleman, when even every gentleman wears a starched cravat or a black stock; a very high starched shirt-collar, and deep wristbands. Mamma has had all William's altered; they only came to the knuckles, and he says no gentleman, at Eton, can wear such narrow, awkward things."

"And I have worn them the breadth of a nar-

row tape, frilled to the knuckles," said the Curate. "And starch, that mysterious mucilage of Fashion! What a history has it had since its introduction into England, when ladies were taught to starch, and to make the starch, by foreigners; as the harp and guitar are taught now by signiors and signoras; and at as dear, or indeed a much dearer rate. Why, that history might make a volume, from the yellow starch of poisoning Mrs. Turner, down to the greatest discovery of this age, 'the starched neckcloth' of Beau Brummel."

"The ruffs and hoop farthingales of the old times—surely modern fashion never equalled them in absurdity?—those stiff, high stays which made a lady look like a hog in armour; my umbrella-bonnet never can vie in absurdity with these," said Miss Harding, as the Curate displayed the stays and ruff of a beauty of the days of Elizabeth and her successor. "Then what, madam, think you of that most deforming of all fashions to a fine figure, that bunch on the back which you wear, introduced, no doubt, by some ill-made, cunning Frenchwoman. The *saddle*, do you call it, or what? which English-

men have ridiculed in vain; and ridicule will be vain, so long as ladies admire the deformity among themselves. Conceive a sculptured female form, with that stuffing,—what would you suppose she had got on her back?—what would you make of it?"

"Pray, my good sir, no patronizing of sculpture drapery. Have you forgot our late classic rage,—our *à la Grecque* and *à la Circassienne*, and every thing but English, the semi-naked costume, worse than the most exposed busts of Lely or Vandyke. That, however, did not—could not—last long, nor spread far in England," continued Mrs. Herbert. "And long may the Gothic hoop of our grandmothers protect us from the scanty drapery which France and Italy, for a few mad years, sent us over as *classic*. But your pictures will be more welcome than my disquisitions."

A Turkish lady and an Effendi; a Polish and Hungarian lady; a captive Circassian; an Albanian; a girl of Finland, and one of the Society Islands gracefully crowned with a coronet of natural flowers, were represented in succession. All the

figures were striking—most of them attractive in their respective dresses and ornaments. The boys were much delighted with these pictures.

"How provoking, that in England we should have nothing we can call a national costume," said Miss Harding,—"not even our peasantry; all change, change! and generally all ugly. Now, every national costume looks well; whether from association or intrinsic beauty I cannot say. I imagine the latter, as no people of any refinement, or with taste for the arts, could settle down into a stiff, ungraceful, inconvenient garb."

"My dear young lady, you forget that English people *must* spend so much a-year in clothes and fashions, whether they can afford it or not; that not one of us will speak to another, not even to our dearest friends, if in a shabby or in an old-cut coat; and that, if we don't actually spend as much on dress as we pretend, we must at least try to make our neighbours believe we do; and so we are content to continue clumsy imitators of the French, to re-act their fashions, catch our own from them again as novel, and to remain, in dress, not English people, but mere English

gentlemen and ladies of the year or month that is passing.

"I am sorry I cannot illustrate all the changes even masculine garbs have undergone among us within the last forty years. The figures would be innumerable. To cut the old school altogether, we shall begin with Charles Fox, a Macaroni, as the dandy of sixty years ago was called, in red-heeled shoes."

The statesman and orator was duly inspected by the spectators.

"Now, see here, a first-rate buck of 1780, or thereabouts, in a pea-green coat."

"Little Capriole, I declare, to the life!" cried Miss Emma Lydgate. "See, Fanny, our village dancing-master."

"Something like, save the colours; Mr. Capriole wears a black coat."

"Rusty, you mean," retorted the young lady.

"No," returned Fanny, "I mean what I say—black," and her mother was pleased with her spirit.

"I have a description, ready made, of this *buck*, who flourished long before the late grand era of

boots, whether Hussars, Hessians, Hoby's, or Wellington's, and was a *fashionable*, notwithstanding.

"There he stands 'in a coat of light green, with sleeves too small for the arms, and buttons too big for the sleeves; a pair of Manchester fine stuff breeches, without money in the pockets; clouded silk stockings, but no legs; a club of hair behind, larger than the head that carries it; a hat of the size of sixpence on a block not worth a farthing.'"

"What a start Beau Brummel gives you, Miss Lydgate! and what a leap that truly great genius, the abdicated monarch of Fashion, took beyond our little pea-green buck of 1780."

"Ay, indeed, he looks something like a gentleman;—his starched neckcloth so exquisitely tied; his head fixed or turning so; and his coat—not a crease in it—fits him as tight as if he were cut out of cork, as our William says. Another and another! such elegant-looking young men—Brummel improved; and those mustaches,—and their long, gilt spurs!"

"Very knowing-looking chaps these," said Mr. Frank Consadine, whose whiskers were already

budding. "I know you hate switch-tailed dress-coats, Miss Sophia; but don't you think those embroidered military-like surtouts handsome?"

"They are all so stiff," said Sophia; "one would think that, besides the neckcloth, the entire gentleman was dipped in starch from top to toe."

Mr. Dodsley shifted his figure—"O, monstrous! what have we here, sir?" cried Miss Lydgate, who, the boys thought, used her privilege of being the stranger, to see every thing first, with more readiness than politeness.—"One of the handsomest couples of their time,—persons of high rank and high fashion; Jack Campbell, afterwards Duke of Argyle, in the full uniform of a colonel; and his lady, the beautiful Duchess of Hamilton, in a court-dress of George the Second's age. She was one of the celebrated beauties, the Irish Gunnings."

The ladies all insisted on a peep of Jack Campbell and his beautiful "Gunning."—"Rather better than their paltry successors of 1780, however," said Miss Harding.

"Yes, Jane, the moss and ivy of antiquity begin to throw an ornamental veil around them," said Mrs. Herbert, "otherwise our beau and belle

of 1780 are, elementally, quite as well dressed as those of 1745, or the macaroni of 1765."

"I wish there was any veil thrown over that bit of a three-cornered hat, or *chapeau de bras*," cried Sophia, "it is so unlike the gentleman who bears it."

"And the lady's hoop, and powder, and high-heeled shoes and buckles; and such sleeves!—goodness!—how ugly!"

"Don't be rash about the sleeves, Miss Lydgate," whispered Miss Harding, laughingly, "they are quite in vogue, or will be this spring, by the name of the *Sontag* or Fanny Kemble sleeve, I forget which. It is not the first time a fair actress has stood godmother to a favourite fashion."

"Those the Sontags!—mamma had a letter about them. Well, they don't look so ill; but the apron,—the lappets,—the bits of gloves!"

"All indispensable in court-dress, you know. But exit the beautiful Gunning. I see she won't please you, Miss Lydgate. Here is another beautiful, witty, and celebrated woman of that age, or a little earlier, though she lingered on to it. How like you her?"

"A little better,—she is plainer,—not quite so

fantastic as your fine Duchess,—more Holbein-like," said Sophia.

"Yet this lady was prodigiously ridiculed for that very dress. It was the fashion of her youth, and she chose to abide by it, and carry it into the Fashionable world, after it was forty years past date. The ancient beauty and the ancient dress were of course laughed at; and they deserved it—at least the woman—the innocent dress is even pretty. This was the Duchess of Queensberry—'Prior's Kitty,'—Gay's patroness. You know who this eccentric but really benevolent woman was, Sophia; and you may learn by her how foolish it is to brave Fashion, at least in her own resorts; and also how little there really is to choose between a most fashionable and unfashionable dress, in a very few years or months after both are exploded. Now, Miss Lydgate, I owe you amends for so many inflictions of the old costume,—see here."

"An officer of the Guards, in full regimentals; a hussar officer, mounted; a lancer! so foreign-looking,—so brave! with those thick, dark mustaches"——

"Which he very probably bought in yonder per-

fumery shop in the distance," said George Herbert.

"Let me see a lancer," cried Charles—"And let me see"—"And me see;" and curiosity seemed to overpower good-breeding.

"I think Jack Campbell looked as *brave* as that ugly fellow, though he had no beard," cried Charles. "And so do I," said Norman Gordon—"And more like an English or Scottish gentleman too.—"O, not half so *fascinating*," said Miss Lydgate.

"I do fear I like this new military dress better," said Sophia reluctantly.—"Not altogether the beard though—with Queen Eleanor's pardon."

"Goodness, Sophia, I *have* told you twenty times the mustache is not a beard," cried Miss Lydgate; and as Mr. Dodsley perceived that the "hairy excrement" on which fashion has ever displayed so many of her wildest freaks, was to become the subject of warm contention for some time, he turned aside to converse with the elder ladies.

"If starch get one volume in your Annals of Fashion, Mr. Dodsley,—though I think you might include buckram and whalebone, as an appendix,—

beards will require two," said Mrs. Herbert, smiling,—" so momentous and monstrous have been the revolutions they have undergone; but as we need not spur on these youths 'to hunt for hairs out of season,' as some body wittily says," and she nodded towards Mr. Frank Consadine, who was now deep in the mystery of the lancer's mustaches—" I hope you will shew us your personal ornaments."

The mustache controversy remained undecided. The young ladies tired of it, and begged Mr. Dodsley to continue his exhibition. " I fear," said he, " we have little time to bestow on the ornaments of antiquity; yet personal ornaments have ever been so much coveted that we cannot wholly pass them over. This was considered a favourite and splendid one. Regard my Hebrew belle, I pray you," and he shewed the picture. " O hideous!" exclaimed the girls—" a nose-ring hanging down so far,—uglier than a turkey cock's pendant,—nose-jewels! what an odious, abominable fashion."

" Here is a Jew lady who tops the mode," said the exhibitor. " You perceive she has both nostrils bored—rings in each. I will not shock you with

the slit ears, lips, and noses, and ornaments of fish bones worn by some savage tribes."

"There never was so ugly a fashion as nose-rings," exclaimed Miss Lydgate.

"They are to be sure not quite so manageable, and more in the way than ear-rings, otherwise I can see little to choose between them," said the curate.

"Boring any part of the human body, to insert ornaments, or squeezing or scarifying its surface like the *tatooers* of the South Sea Islands, comes to much the same thing in my opinion; such practices never could have arisen among a refined people. Semi-barbarous tribes, and the lowest class among civilized nations, are ever the most addicted to ill-imagined personal ornament, as distinguished from elegance or neatness in dress. Filth and sparkling bits of coloured glass, dirty naked extremities, and gold or silver ornaments always go together. I will shew you barbaric ornament at its height. See here Judith in the tent of Holofernes—a beautiful specimen of the Jewish dame of high fashion, tricked out to allure and captivate. Etty and other painters have had the good sense to omit many of the

Hebrew lady's ornaments, and especially the nose-ring, which modern taste could not stand;—but thus probably appeared the real Judith:—what a rich profusion of ornament!—The long necklace of pearls, with gold beads, coral, and gems intermixed—the jewelled nose-rings tinkling and glancing,—the bracelets, and their clasps, quite in our own modern fashion, but far more costly,—the armlets and those little festoons of pearls and precious stones, hanging from them like a fringe,—the ankle-bells,—the strings of pearl and gold, wreathed in snowy folds above her feet, and her embroidered sandals;—all her ornaments valued the more for their tinkling and glancing; her feet ringing chimes, as she strode stately on; her upper robe of rich purple flowing in a sweeping train behind and around her! The Hebrew woman's veil you have already seen; it was ample, and could be removed, or thrown over her person at pleasure; but in the head-dress of Judith you may perceive a close resemblance to that of Mary Stuart, Queen of the Scots; a bandeau, studded with gems and pearls, confines the veil, and encircles the forehead to the temples. From each end hangs,

as you see, those strings of pearl, which were sometimes fixed under the chin; these ornaments are as graceful as ear-pendants, and not half so barbarous. Her fingers are, you see, covered with rich rings; and her girdle, which is above three yards long, is one blaze of embroidery and jewellery. This is her *purse*, also very richly decorated; what you modern ladies now call your *reticule*."

The figure of Judith was greatly admired, for the elegance and richness of the ornaments. "The costume does look splendid," said Mr. Dodsley. "But would an Englishwoman endure it, with all its drawbacks? It is greatly doubted whether the Jew lady knew of any comb save her own, or her maid's fingers; night-shifts, night-caps, clean linen, shoes and stockings, were all out of the question; *comfort*, cleanliness, air, the jewelled dame never dreamed of. Though she had her perfumes, and her mirror, the jewelled nose-ring did not imply the more useful pocket-handkerchief. But we must leave the toilet of the Hebrew lady, and the yet more elaborate and refined one of the Roman *elegantè*. They are merely subjects of antiquarian research and of literary curiosity. It is enough for us

that human vanities and human necessities are the same in all ages, and that comfort and elegance in clothing, and personal cleanliness seem to be valued exactly in proportion as the taste for gaudy ornament declines. No Englishman of rank at the present day wears any personal ornament, when he can help it, save those which denote his honours; even ladies of high rank appear to regard their diamonds rather as badges of their station, which at stated times they must assume, than as decorative. 'Rich and rare,'—but as few as possible, is their ordinary taste; and the money once locked up in trinkets and ornaments, is now bestowed on objects of art, on books, pictures, and sculpture. It is probable that this taste will increase among us; and that shirt-pins, and bunches of seals, may soon share the fate of diamond shoe-buckles, and tawdry gold-lace."

"But I am sorry, sir, to see you packing up your show-box," said Sophia, "as I am certain you have many more costumes to exhibit."

"That can be done again, my dear; but even the few specimens you have seen may guard you against a Cockney feeling on the subject of dress. A London Cockney, or Parisian Baudad, believes, as

firmly as his creed, that no one can be well-dressed out of his own street or ward; and *Cockneyism* in substance, if not in name, is by no means confined to these classes. This narrow-minded, exclusive feeling, the true offspring of ignorance and conceit, is of as sure and rapid growth in the breast of an *elegante* of Almack's, or a lounger in Bond Street, as in that of the small haberdasher whose shop is under the very shadow of Bow Bells; in the rank and the locality of the *Cockney* lie all the difference, for the feeling is precisely the same, whether the persons despised be French, Italians, or only inhabitants of Brentford; or whether the towns be Rochester or Naples."

Mr. Dodsley apologized for his long homily on dress, which he said he feared would share the fate of most other sermons. Mrs. Herbert hoped better. She trusted his young audience would study the boundaries which prudence and propriety set to fashion; the true value of dress, as estimated by good sense and good taste, and the exact degree of observance which fashion enjoins on those who would hit that happy medium which lies between its equally ridiculous extremes.

HIGH LIFE,

CONTINUATION OF "WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL."

After seeing Windsor Castle, and the King, said Miss Harding, I looked forward with delight to my visit to Aulmerle Park, and my noble young name-mother. But various causes, and, I believe, the management of my mother, prevented this grand visit till I had almost completed my fifteenth year. In the interval, a very considerable alteration had taken place both in my character and person. Two of my sisters had married, and my younger sisters were often with them, companions or nurses. I was thus left much alone with my mother, her companion, and nurse, and assistant in housekeeping. She interested herself much in my studies; and watching my tendencies, gently applyed those restraints and correctives which my pride and self-will required.

When I was about to step into the chaise, which was to bear me to Aulmerle Park, she said, while she embraced me, "You have already, Jane, seen virtuous humble life; and you have been bred in the bosom of that safe and happy middle state, where the virtues are best nursed, and find their true asylum; you are now to see High Life, and participate in its most envied pleasures. When you return, you will tell me which state you prefer."

Though perfectly happy and contented with my own condition, there could, I then fancied, be little question about which condition was to be preferred where a choice was permitted.

I found my young, noble name-mother much changed from the time of our first and only interview five years before. She was no longer the fair, sylph-like creature of my recollections,—of frank, cordial, simple, and rather awkward though spirited manners. Lady Jane was now very tall and large for her years, with the decided air of high-blood and high-breeding,—too much, however, in the sense these phrases might have been applied to some fine specimen in her father's stud. Her complexion was more brilliant than ever, her head

well turned, finely set on her shoulders, and proudly carried. There was an evident consciousness of her high strain; but it did not seem assumption so much as the spontaneous dictate of nature; yet the impression which I received from her person, bearing, and air, were so much those that might have been conveyed by some noble animal, that I quarrelled with my own sensations, as injurious and derogatory to my noble friend.

My reception was gracious, or my own enthusiasm supplied all deficiency of cordiality.

The Lady Jane and myself had both been spoiled, but in very different ways. I had been the darling younger child, the pet plaything, in a large family of well-educated persons, full of knowledge, and possessing a generous and high-minded tone of thinking and judging. My friends belonged in some degree to the aristocracy of intellect, and of enlarged benevolence; and I, like Lady Jane, was proud of my *caste*. I had been spoiled by an excess of tenderness, of care, and sympathy, in all my feelings and pursuits, and I required to be sent abroad to learn a true judgment of life, and self-reliance. My noble godmother had been as deeply

and more fatally tainted. Lady Jane had never been the object of any enlightened affection save to her father, whom in childhood she very rarely saw. The blind, doating kindness of her grandmother, and the animal fondness of her nurse, do not deserve the name. Constituted as society is in England,—the school-room, the play-ground, the race-course, the ring, and even worse scenes, supply correctives to the self-will and arrogance of the male portion of our young nobility; but the evils which beset an only child and high-born heiress, had, from her cradle, met no countervailing influence in the education of Lady Jane. From her birth she had been surrounded by low interested flatterers, corrupted by power prematurely enjoyed, and fostered in self-will, till the slightest symptoms of opposition or dissent, however polite and guarded, were viewed not merely with indignation but astonishment. As an illustration of her training, I may mention that some years previous to my visit, Jane had been initiated into the delights of power, by constant solicitation of her patronage; and at twelve years old, had actually promised away church-livings, leases, farms, groom-

ships, &c. &c. to be bestowed on the relatives of her different nurses, attendants, and favourites. Those expectations were repaid by flattery, and improper and forbidden indulgencies; and when the Lady Jane was removed to the house of her father, by secret connivance in evading or counteracting his plans for his daughter. Her ignorance, he trusted, he might remove, her pride he hoped to make his instrument in her improvement; but her ungovernable self-willedness, and those bursts of imperious passion, submitted to by her obsequious slaves, who, when not the immediate victims, affected to consider such storms as proofs of high native spirit, infallible signs of the "born lady," required other remedies,—a freer mixture with equal society, and the example of dignified feminine manners. Some of these advantages he proposed to himself, in inviting a number of young persons to his house, doing me, from respect to my mother's tuition, the honour to include me in this circle.

Among the juvenile guests were the daughters of the neighbouring Rector, who, by the mother's side at least, had pretensions to birth; a young gentleman from Cambridge, the son of the tutor of

the Marquis; and that gentleman's pupil, a young Mr. Pendarves. The latter youth was considered the most important personage among the guests, for it was imagined, whispered, and understood, that he was to be the future husband of the heiress. He was, himself, the heir of immense wealth, and possessed every advantage of character and person that could be wished for in a son-in-law. The match, arranged in the servants' hall many years before, was now freely talked of in dressing-rooms and closets; and though disdained by the pride of Lady Jane, was nevertheless interesting to her vanity. Some of her contemptuous speeches had been repeated to the youth, who, with greater knowledge of life, and a more enlarged understanding, had much of her own spirit, and it thenceforth appeared to be his study to pique and mortify his destined bride, as much by slighting herself as by paying homage and attention to those about her. It was my misfortune to be one of the instruments of Pendarves' pleasure in mortifying or taming the pride of Lady Jane.

It is more surprising than of rare occurrence, that though early very sensible of the inequality of

conditions, among such persons as Emma Roberts, Jane Ford, and myself, I had never once adverted to the far greater difference between my own rank and that of Jane Aulmerle, till I found my own childish airs of patronage re-acted on me, and in a meaner strain. I managed the self-love of my *protegée*, or strove to do so. I wished to be felt only as the noble, generous friend, imparting knowledge, and bestowing happiness on my *inferiors*. Of that happiness I was indeed to be sole judge; and I was to be loved, as well as admired by those I patronised. My generosity was sufficiently vitiated, but that of Lady Jane was wholly spurious. Her dependents—for friends she neither admitted nor wished to obtain—were to have no separate existence, and no will save hers,—to live but in the reflection of her greatness, and be fed by the crumbs which fell from her table. My self-love, my feelings were of no account with her, nor had she the faintest perception of any difference which education and refinement had created between me and the meanest creature honoured with her passing notice. My first refusal to be overwhelmed, confounded, and mortified by her *exclusive* posses-

sions and advantages, excited, I doubt not, sincere astonishment in my young patroness, at the impertinence of my ignorance and indifference. Our first differences arose from this failure of admiration, levied compulsorily; for as a voluntary contribution it was at this time freely paid.

We had each acquired a fashion of our own, in valuing and admiring the many beautiful objects of nature, and the productions of art around us, in the mansion and the grounds. I had now seen many fine houses, gardens, and galleries; and though gratitude and affection disposed me to admire those of Aulmerle, I could neither undervalue others nor flatter these. I besides loved many things despised by Jane, for what I felt to be their intrinsic beauty, or for some recollection of my childhood, or charm associated with, were it but a weed or wild-flower,—something in romantic tradition, or popular poetry, which enshrined it in my memory and my heart. I even thought the lion in his native forests, the wild, shaggy, untamed monarch of the desert, a nobler object than when blazoned on the arms of Aulmerle. This was a weakness which Jane, forced to believe, could only despise.

I knew a good deal, for my standing, of all the

heroes and heroines of history and romance, from the Crusades downwards; but of the family history of the Aulmerles I was singularly ignorant, to be their agent's daughter. Very few of the line were indeed mentioned, even in county records, from the time of Sir Reginald coming over with the Conqueror, till the family had been ennobled by Charles the Second. In this branch of knowledge Jane far surpassed me. Among the first lessons of her childhood was heraldry, studied at the feet of her grandmother. There, also, she had been taught "little Latin and less logic" by the chaplain; yet, I imagine, it would have cost her some trouble to give any cogent reason for her firm belief in the hereditary and indefeasible right of the sole daughter of the House of Aulmerle, to knowledge, talent, and personal accomplishment, rising in due, that is to say, in infinite gradation above what might be attained by the daughter of the agent of that great House, by the most careful instruction and diligent study. Yet my superiority, in many frivolous points, was too evident to be habitually discredited. By irritating her temper to a kind of scornful envy, it excited her ambition.

The arrival of so many young persons, all pos-

sessed of accomplishments, and distinguished by good manners, threw her mind into a state of fermentation; and her judgment suddenly became too ripe to submit to the soporific influence of the lulling fantasies suggested by her flatterers. She was now willing to part with her ignorance, if that could be easily done, but not to abate her "graceful pride,"—her "noble spirit."

Lady Jane derived from nature little of that sensibility and delicacy of organization which is supposed to give a taste for the fine arts; but she had good ordinary parts, and the strong, active ambition which fosters perseverance. I felt real pleasure in smoothing her path, a generous satisfaction in promoting improvement so gratifying to her father,—her father, the companion, in childhood, of mine,—the friend of my whole family,—who had been so kind to all my brothers, and to the husbands of my sisters,—who was so kind, so paternally gracious to myself. I could have laid down my life to make his daughter worthy of him, and the noble creature which I believed nature had intended her to be.

Our visiters departed. There is, during youth,

a charm in companionship, and in social study of the lighter kind, which softens the most callous, and warms the coldest nature. We became better friends now. My assiduous lessons, regarded, in appearance, while spectators were around us, as crude hints, or officious interferences, were more graciously received. They were always profited by; and if, at former seasons, I had striven to be contented, I was now delighted. Mademoiselle, who had, of late years, held a sinecure office, so far as the mental cultivation of her pupil was concerned, congratulated herself on improvement agreeably manifested to her by the praises of the Marquis, the present of a diamond ring, and also by the gentler manners of her scholar; and she demanded no more than she felt her due, in claiming to have suggested the happy idea of a fellow-student.

When the period of my visit drew to a close, the Marquis, meaning, I believe, to promote my happiness, wrote to my mother, notifying my protracted absence, satisfied that I must be delighted to remain in his splendid mansion, the companion of his daughter, and the sharer of all her pleasures. Great people, though often discontented with their

own state, can never be brought to comprehend how small ones should not be grateful and overjoyed to participate in the exterior advantages of their condition, no matter at what expense of fortune, or sacrifice of time, comfort, and interest. It is a pity there are not more small people with sufficient spirit and true dignity of mind to set them right on this point. Could this really kind, great lord have known how cheerful, free, social, and improving was that small home which "Little Jane" had, far off in the pent-up heart of London, he would have formed a truer estimate of human felicity, at least of what constituted her happiness, and have let her escape from high life to happy life. How did my ideas change in that brief six weeks! What a commentary was the character and conduct of the Lady Jane and her courtiers on my mother's precepts!

Our duets and figure dances, now that we were left alone, produced, I have said, greater intimacy between my young patroness and myself. If she did not confide in me, she was too young, and too proudly indifferent to my opinion, or affected to be so, to disguise her genuine character and

inclinations from me. I saw virtues as well as faults, or dispositions that if duly cultivated might become virtues; and my zeal for her honour, and ardent desire to see the being I still admired, the noble creature for which I imagined nature intended her, since by fortune she had been so highly distinguished, made me, from hints and cautions, rise into passionate entreaties and expostulations, dictated by mingled affection and enthusiasm. From smiling at my earnestness, her vanity flattered by perceiving herself the object of so warm and engrossing a sentiment, Lady Jane became impatient of my remonstrances; and one day told me in a tone which for ever silenced my entreaties, "That she could spare advice which neither became my age nor our relative situations." I had never presumed to advise,—I had only entreated her to remember her duty, to consult her true dignity, and obey the injunctions of her father. In my presence, as if making me witness or guarantee of the engagement, he had requested, and commanded that his daughter should cease to hold the daily, familiar, gossipping intercourse with a woman who had been her attendant in childhood,

which he justly considered degrading, if not pernicious at her now advanced age. This person held an influence over the mind of her ladyship, or over her habits, which could not be called the power of a strong mind over a feeble one. It was the not less frequent influence of a mean, supple, and fawning character, in a menial condition, over an arrogant, haughty superior, intolerant of independence of sentiment, and valuing subservience above integrity and rugged honest zeal. It was at the suggestion of my mother, on certain information derived from the housekeeper, that Mrs. Martha had been removed from Lady Jane's antechamber to the laundry; and it was quite in accordance with Martha's habits of judging and acting, to direct on me a portion of the ill-will she felt towards my mother, as the instrument of what she considered her exile and degradation. When I not only declined to accompany Lady Jane on her clandestine visits to her old attendant, but entreated her to forbear this direct violation of her father's orders, Mrs. Martha became my confirmed enemy, and, as I was told, vowed to drive me in disgrace from the

house. "Drive me from the house she may," I proudly replied to my malicious informant; "but in disgrace, never,—that must be my own act."

At home I had been a lively, social, *chattering* girl. Now, in HIGH LIFE, my best pleasure, my only solace, was to steal away after our daily tasks, and while Lady Jane unbent from her pride in the vulgar joys of the laundry saturnalia, and Mademoiselle tried new head-dresses and attitudes, or resigned herself to her *chaise longue*, and the black vapours,—to niche myself in a closet, opening on the back-stairs, where the housemaid kept her brooms and dust-pans, there to devour all manner of books, apart from the petty molestations to which my social studies were liable.

In my crypt I had but one rule; it was suggested by affection. I selected all books the titles of which I had ever heard named by my brothers, sisters, or father; this was recommendation enough. Some one, I believe Johnson, says, it is with books as with certain natural productions, from which vigorous digestive powers will derive wholesome nutriment, while in weaker constitutions they turn to

mortal poison. I trust my mental *idiosyncrasy* is chiefly extractive of good, for I swallowed in fearful quantity.

Even after I failed in influencing the opinions of Lady Jane, I still endeavoured to rouse her pride against associations so degrading to herself—so positively prohibited by her father. I heard Mademoiselle repeatedly expostulate with her pupil on the same subject, and threaten to acquaint the Marquis with this forbidden intercourse; but Lady Jane only contemned her the more for the impotent threat, which she well knew the poor dependent foreigner had not firmness to execute. "You wish to keep your lucrative appointments in this family, I believe, Mademoiselle," was the sneering answer of the pupil, conveying in its tone a determined threat. I was superior to selfish fears; and it is probable that threats to me would rather have urged than checked my youthful spirit; but I disdained to act as an informer.

Accident produced the discovery. I was one evening, as usual, in my sanctuary of brooms, when the Marquis, with Mr. Pendarves, the young gentleman I before mentioned, chanced to descend the

back stairs, which led from the library to the grounds by a private way. A glimpse was caught of a white frock in an awkward situation, and I rose from my clandestine studies, trembling and blushing as if caught in some dire offence. The Marquis looked somewhat sternly at me, and took up the large volume which I laid down.

"History of music—Burney—I admire your subject more than your place of study, Miss Jane," and his features relaxed into good humour. "What brought you to this odd corner?" The housemaid, whose abstraction of a broom had left the door a-jar, and led to the discovery of my little person, vehemently protested her own innocence. "She had nothing to say to the young ladies of the family,—upon her troth she had enough to do in minding her own work without gossipping with ladies." I took all blame on myself for violating the sanctuary of brooms and mops.

"Poor little Cinderella," said the good-natured nobleman,—"and has she no retreat in this house save this dust-hole, to pursue her studies;—but where is Lady Jane? I know Mademoiselle allows the black vapours to exhale in a gentle nap

about this hour, but where is her pupil?—Jane is surely awake?" I made no reply. "Come, we will visit Jane, and carry Dr. Burney to a station more worthy of him." I hung back, and the Marquis took my arm as if to lead me on. "I will not, I assure you, Miss Jane, rudely break on the slumbers of Mademoiselle," said he laughing; "but I wish to see my daughter,—where is she?"—I still made no answer.—"I guess how I am to construe this silence," said he in an altered voice, and he left me, and went directly to his daughter's chamber, the frequent rendezvous of Lady Jane and her favourites, though found empty at this time. He searched the school-room, as our parlour was called, the library, and the billiard-room, and proceeded to the housekeeper's room,—and by the matron who presided there, was directed, in her indignation at the low-lived propensities of her haughty young lady, to the laundry. There, in fact, sat the high-born, haughty Lady Jane, on an elevated table, in the full indulgence of mirth, and unbridled career of gossip, which were her indemnification for hours of study and unsocial state.

Though passion and resentment instantly cloud

ed her brows, she had not yet learned to brave her father to his face. Casting a rapid glance of anger at her associates, he commanded her to follow him, and she obeyed like a fascinated bird.

Meanwhile I thought it an office of good-nature to arouse Mademoiselle, to meet the storm. She exclaimed, screamed, stamped, smelt to her salts, deluged us both with *eau de Cologne*, and would undoubtedly have taken hysterics, had time been permitted for this feminine indulgence. But the Marquis's bell drove off the coming fit, and we both obeyed his summons to the library, that star-chamber of great houses, where summary justice is executed on offending young ladies. Though somewhat alarmed, I had sufficient presence of mind to adjust the wig, or "hair head-dress," and kerchief of poor Mademoiselle, else there might have been such a deplorable violation of *bienseance* as she certainly could not have survived. Her "good French heart" never forgot my good English sense at this juncture.

Lady Jane, recovered from the shame and first flutter of detection, now stood in the library a sullen, haughty culprit, her brows lowering defiance.

I was first put to the bar, my case was short, and my sentence was contrived, not very wisely, to form a part of the Lady Jane's punishment. "Since the laundry and scullery were not favourite haunts of mine, I was told to transfer myself and my books to the little yellow dressing-room near my chamber, where a fire was to be kept for me, and which I was to consider as my own inviolate apartment." I curtsied, and would have moved off, but was desired to remain. Mademoiselle had meanwhile entered on a voluble vindication of herself, at the expense of pupil, nurse, grandmamma, and the whole system of domestic life and education in England. She was politely entreated to be silent for one moment.

"I ask you, Miss Jane Harding," said his lordship, "in presence of this lady to whom I have intrusted the education of my daughter, if she is acquainted, or can have had any suspicion of Lady Jane's daily visits to the female servants of the establishment?"

"My lord," I replied, "the Lady Jane, or Mademoiselle herself, may best answer that question."

Lady Jane made a disdainful gesture.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the governess, sinking back in her chair, lifting her hands, and throwing up her open palms as if deprecating the being left to the generosity or mercy of her pupil.

"Will you speak, Lady Jane Aulmerle? Has this lady been merely remiss in her duties, or has she connived at your disobedience and improprieties?" But the Lady Jane would not speak.

"O! Mon Dieu!" again exclaimed the governess, turning supplicating and tearful eyes on her pupil.

"Answer me!" said the father, in a tone which made the proud girl quail for an instant; but all her evil passions were inflamed, and she replied, "I cannot, my lord, pretend to say what Mademoiselle knows, or thinks about in her sleep."

The insolent malignity of this speech roused every generous feeling of my nature. I started up by an involuntary impulse; then retreated, abashed, and hesitating to wound the feelings of the father, by exposing the meanness of his ungenerous child. My movement was observed, and I was commanded to speak; "The truth was on your lips, Jane," said he,—"give it way. I shall be your

protector,—did truth ever need protection." I then said that I had repeatedly heard Mademoiselle entreat her ladyship to refrain from those forbidden and improper indulgences. I did not add that my own entreaties had been joined to hers. Indeed the ungenerous conduct of the noble pupil to her poor, feeble-minded governess, excited my indignation much more forcibly than her behaviour to myself. The Marquis said a few gracious words to me, which stung his own proud daughter to the heart, and dismissed us together, retaining the governess for a private conversation,—and probably a lecture. Lady Jane brushed past me on the stairs like a tragedy Queen quitting the scene in rage; and my first half-hour in my pretty yellow room was passed in tears. Mademoiselle then burst upon me, with a storm of kisses, praises, and promises; hugging me to her bosom, calling me her good angel, abusing her pupil in no measured terms, and lamenting afresh her misery in being doomed to remain in England.

Next morning we found that an entire revolution had been effected in the offices; the dismission extended to every individual, male and female, con-

nected with the establishment, who was even suspected of abetting the malpractices of the heiress.

The only words that Lady Jane addressed to me in the course of this or the next day were, "You may congratulate yourself, Miss Jane Harding, on the ruin of so many poor persons;—pray how soon are the vacancies your arts have made in this house to be filled up by your own creatures, and your mother's dependents?"

"My mother's dependents!—my arts!—you wrong me, Lady Jane; but your secret thoughts do me justice even now."

"I believe they do," said she coldly; and the enigma was partly explained when the Marquis sent for me to the housekeeper's room to inquire about my friend, Jane Ford, whom the housekeeper had mentioned as a suitable young person to supply the place of the attendant who had waited on Lady Jane. I was delighted at the prospect opening to my early friend and *protegée*, and said for her all I could, and considering my limited experience of life and of character, far more than I ought. I thought of nothing but emancipating Jane from the confinement, late hours, and drudgery of her present call-

ing; and I knew that though a supercilious, ungenerous companion and friend to those with whom she associated, holding the shew of equality without the feeling of it, the Lady Jane was not ill-natured to her submissive thralls.

"You are a warm friend, Jane," said the Marquis,—"if your encomium is but half deserved I shall think myself fortunate in securing the attendance of this young person for my daughter. That she has been so much in your family, and under the eye of your mother, is to me a sure guarantee of her worth; nor do I think her acquirements an objection, but the reverse:—the personal attendants of ladies of high rank, before commerce had revolutionized English society, were often women of family as well as of education. Things were better ordered then. We are too little attentive to the education of our domestics. There is a certain atmosphere of knowledge and elegance, which should be diffused even in the nursery."

My mother was immediately written to; but she started many unforeseen objections to our plan, insisting chiefly on the nearness of age between the mistress and the maid, where both were still

so young, and on the total inexperience of the latter. This was a recommendation to the Marquis, who had imbibed a rooted dislike to the clever, regularly-graduated Abigail of fashionable life.

I therefore expected Jane, and conned the counsels and warnings which my superior wisdom was to afford, as guides to her ignorance and inexperience. On the day she was to arrive, Lady Jane met me with sparkling eyes and inflamed cheeks. Her resentments were kept alive by her dismissed favourites, with whom she still contrived to have daily secret communication, aroused and excited by being the head of a party,—a faction, opposed, as she fancied, to the housekeeper, the governess, myself, and our tool the Marquis; and she was also animated by a kind of spurious generosity in behalf of her suffering vassals.

"So you and your mother have succeeded, Miss Harding, in placing your creature, your spy, about me;—know that if I be Jane Anlmerle, ye shall repent it—ay, bitterly." I was not permitted time to vindicate myself, or to state that my mother had strongly disapproved of Jane Ford for her Ladyship's attendant.

. Into the bosom of that early friend, I poured forth, with girlish, headlong impulse my suppressed feelings. She was that very day from London, from my home, the bearer of kind letters and numerous messages to me, the sharer of my childish sports and thoughts, my fellow-architect, or my *kod-man*, in building my first castles in the air. Amidst the vehemence of my own feeling, I could not help noting the cool, self-possessed serenity with which Jane listened to me. "I must make the best of my humble lot," she said at last. "Unlike happier you, it is not given me to choose,—and I know that you, my best friend, would not wish to injure me with my future lady and mistress, who may be so useful to me." I warmly protested not, and at once acquiesced in the propriety of Jane acting coldly towards me in public, while secret affection was to indemnify us both for apparent indifference. Jane asked me many questions concerning not only the members of the household, but the guests and head servants, and I sketched the character of each to the best of my skill.

With such consummate address did Jane Ford conduct herself, that in a few days her young mis-

tress scarcely concealed the fancied triumph obtained over her father in turning his own engine against himself. This was in reality the triumph of Jane Ford. That ingratiating stranger laid herself out, from the hour of her arrival, to make friends on every side; and as she was aware of the danger of conniving at Lady Jane's open and bold improprieties, she undertook the task of supplying in her own person all former favourites and ministers. In this she succeeded as by miracle. Instead of village scandal, the Lady Jane was now entertained with more piquant anecdotes of the fashionable world of London, in which she was so soon to figure; lovers took the place of ponies and donkeys; and the most refined adulation, and vigilant observance, of the coarse fondness, and stolen sweetmeats of nurse Martha. Strict, devoted attention to her lady, and even to her menial duties, did not prevent Jane from conciliating the regard of all around her. Humble, assiduous, observant, from the scullion-wench to the Marquis she made her way, and found favour, by gifts, flatteries, attentions, and an unrelaxing vigilance in adapting herself to the various tastes and ruling passions of those she practised

on:—these tastes and passions she discerned with admirable sagacity. No Jesuit, whose passions are put to sleep, and his will annihilated in devoted pursuance of some grand object of his order, who from infancy has been trained into an intellectual machine, to co-operate in certain purposes, could have exercised greater self-command, than at this time did this young girl; for she too had her object, distant, difficult, but worthy of the devotion of half a life:—it was to give splendour and distinction to the remainder of existence.

The Marquis, after a few days, made me happy by saying, that Jane Ford was quite the sort of young person he liked to see about his daughter. He expected *grisette* smartness, and found gentle, and even polished manners; a deportment modest and graceful, united with the utmost respectfulness. I echoed as warmly as my age permitted the praises of my *protegée*. Her pale cheek faintly flushed, and her deep eye sparkled when I repeated this praise; but this natural emotion was stifled by many humble and deprecatory speeches, expressive of gratitude to myself as the source of this favourable opinion, which I believed quite sincere, yet

felt, I knew not how, to be *mean*. I could not hit on another word than *mean*.

I had been struck on her arrival with the change and improvement visible in the person and manners of Jane. Her dress, her close, plain coif, and, almost antiquated habit, had a certain adaptation to the serious cast of her features, and to her slight, delicate figure, which produced more effect than the most fashionable attire of a smart Abigail. She looked like a lady in a masquerade habit,—one of Holbein's young beauties walking out of the frame. It was not by open struggle and bold rivalship that Jane was to make her way in life, but by striking out a quite new path. She could not be splendid and dashing, but she might be *original*, insinuating, ingratiating. It was not till long afterwards that I learned the source to which Jane was indebted for her remarkable personal improvement. In the routine of her business, she had been frequently seen by a gentleman who had assumed the management of one of the minor theatres; and who was himself a clever general performer. Her good education, if I dare so call her slender accomplishments, but, above all, her gen-

teel figure, and flexibility of voice and features, recommended her to this gentleman as a pupil; and he soon either discovered or imagined theatrical talents of the highest order in the demure, little mantua-maker, who had come with gowns and turbans to his haughty heroines. To the interests of his theatre was now added pride in the talents he had discovered and cultivated; and Jane might, in all probability, have appeared on the boards under some fine fictitious name and character, as the orphan daughter of an officer fallen in the battles of his country, generously sacrificing herself for her family, &c. &c. had she not been invited to Aulmerle Park. This her theatrical friend deemed a fortunate circumstance, as the Marquis, though quieter of late in his habits of life, was known to have been an enthusiastic admirer and patron of the drama; and the new *Star* might emerge from the hemisphere of Aulmerle Park with greater effect and brilliancy, draw more wondering eyes, and, what is more to the purpose, relax more purse-strings, than if rising from the green-room of his little theatre.

As if by accident, and in ridicule of Mademoi-

selle, Jane Ford gave us one evening a specimen of her dramatic talent, with which the Lady Jane, whose tastes were undergoing a rapid change, was evidently struck. She had seen few plays performed, but had heard a great deal of the private theatricals at a great house in our neighbourhood, at which the Marquis did not visit; and, from various causes, she became interested in such exhibitions. Yet I believe her main reason for encouraging Jane by public praise, was to mortify Mademoiselle. This lady was the pupil of some royal or imperial school of declamation in Paris, of which she talked incessantly; and one day an argument arising between her pupil and herself, about the different style of declamation in the French and British theatre, was referred to the Marquis by his daughter, who was resolved, if possible, to convict her governess of ignorance and prejudice.

It was then Lady Jane made boastful announcement of the astonishing dramatic powers which lurked in the modest or demure little girl who waited on herself. The Marquis smiled incredulously, and would have declined the task of umpire, which Lady Jane solicited him to accept. She

was, however, piqued to support her own opinion, and appealed to me, saying, "You will trust Miss Jane Harding's judgment, though you doubt mine, my lord?"—"Yes I will, Jane, and for this good reason, that Miss Jane has had many opportunities of seeing plays well performed, and you have yet had none." I, however, declined giving any opinion:—of the French theatre I knew nothing, and I felt that there was want of propriety and dignity in Lady Jane's governess entering on this sort of frivolous competition with her waiting-maid. But the vanity and patriotism of Mademoiselle were inflamed to extremity; she would have dared Siddons herself to the contest; and as she voluntarily entered the lists by a piece of declamation, and a series of contortions which severely taxed the politeness of the Marquis, Lady Jane dragged her woman forward to the ring.

Modesty and timidity, if not really felt, were never better acted than by the trembling girl, compelled to exhibit her talents before such a spectator. I flew to her support, and would have besought forbearance; but this was going too far, and Jane whispered, "You know I must obey my

lady. She does me but too great honour." That she *must* be obeyed was at all times a welcome declaration to the Lady Jane. She smiled gracious encouragement to her new favourite, saying, "You will do very well, Jane; don't be afraid—is it *her* you fear?" Jane Ford furtively returned the glance of scorn and contempt cast on the instructress by her pupil, with a look so rich in sarcastic humour and vivid expression, as might have proved to the Marquis, had he seen it, that the versatile talents of his daughter's *protegée* were not limited to the service of the serious Muse. Meanwhile, Mademoiselle was ranting forth the part of Iphegenia, with the most extravagant contortions, foaming and writhing in an epilepsy of assumed passion. When she had concluded, Jane whispered, "That it would be unfair to try any scene save this; though the language must be against her." She took the play, glanced over the scene for a few minutes, retired behind a screen, bared her throat, shook loose her silken tresses—then for the first time uncovered in this house—with the simple help of an old red shawl, adjusted her antique dress in more redundant drapery, and rushed upon

the scene, the tender, impassioned heroine of the French tragedian! The effect was electrical;—the Marquis who had remained with us only to gratify his indulged daughter, became interested, and sat in silent astonishment; even "the good French heart" of Mademoiselle was taken by surprise, at hearing her country's language so fluently declaimed,—she embraced her rival, declaring that she reminded her of Clairon. Probably the sole merit of Jane Ford's exhibition was unexpectedness, and there is little doubt that she had diligently studied and rehearsed this scene.

There was even thus early somewhat of the homage which the higher efforts of genius, though displayed in the humblest rank, commands from persons of taste and sensibility, in the manner of the Marquis of Aulmerle to Jane Ford, when he addressed her. But already, as if by the touch of magic, she had sunk into the little, demure, simple girl, shrinking from his praise, looking more timid and child-like than ordinary,—the juvenile face made still more youthful by the close, antique coif, which she had somehow again slipped on.

"Have I gained?" exclaimed Lady Jane, in the true spirit of a seconder or bottle-holder.

"Certainly, Jane, you have; if you still think of competition,—I confess I had lost sight of the contest." We had now some general conversation on Jane's former theatricals. I liked her best in Letitia Hardy, bnt Lady Jane in Euphrasia; and the Marquis requested a farther specimen of her powers in some native heroine. There was a short but pretty pantomimic display of diffidence, bashfulness, and timidity, overpowered at last by the native consciousness of high powers, and the earnest desire to obey an honoured command. Some slight skirmishing in attitude and dumb mimic personation of passion, introduced the balcony, and then the tomb scene of Juliet. Both, but particularly the first scene, was wonderfully performed; and as a lively strain gives relief to a mournful melody, Jane, nodding privately to me, bounced off into Letitia Hardy, sung a gay ballad, and gave us a *pas seul*,—passed into the Widow Cheerly,—Lydia Languish,—back again to the Grecian Daughter, and by more plastic art, sunk into the little, simple, child-

ish, demure Jane Ford, her eyes modestly cast down, her hands hanging crossed before her. A prudent father might not have relished such versatility of talent in the personal attendant of his motherless daughter, and he might nevertheless have been merely a narrow-minded man; but no prudent English mother could have approved of such domestic association, however great might have been her admiration of talent for its own sake.

Subsequent displays shewed me, and, I believe, the Marquis, that we had both in our several ways greatly overestimated the actual powers of Jane Ford; but we had each our prepossessions,—he as patron and instructor, I as friend and admirer. The common vanity of persons who try to catch a sort of reflected lustre, from connecting their names with persons of genius, had, I believe, no place with either of us.

Ennui, and the desire of amusing and improving his daughter, induced the Marquis to encourage and attend her declamations with her humble friend, till he came to be interested by them. Speeches and soliloquies grew to scenes, scenes, so far as

our numbers could admit, to regular dramas, Mademoiselle abetting all folly that took the colour of *spectacle*, and gave her an opportunity of exhibition. To Lady Jane the first part in every piece was at all times allotted; and then the parts were shifted to allow Jane Ford, as she herself dexterously insinuated, to profit as an artist by the hints and beauties the genius of Lady Jane had struck out; for it was now, I found, understood that the *protegée* of the family of Aulmerle was to become the ornament of the British stage. From being interested in her progress, the Marquis came to consider her as his pupil, and as such he became even proud of her attainments, and desirous, since nature had done so much, that they might be displayed where they must ensure honour and advantage to their possessor. "Genius was genius wherever it appeared; and why might not a Farren, a Siddons, or an O'Neil be discovered in this *fascinating* and talented girl." This was getting on with a vengeance; and now Lady Jane had only to coax, and Jane Ford to raise her sidelong, most expressive, and modestly-beseeching eyes to engage the Marquis himself to read, or even walk through a part,

provided we were alone, and that his memory was not overworked. The amateur office of dramatic critic and instructor thus gradually assumed, Jane laboured to make its exercise pleasant. The commentary of her noble instructor was to her as inspiration,—new ideas were caught, new *readings* suggested by the slightest motion of his eye, or inflexion of his voice. I was not wholly the dupe of the unobtrusive, delicate homage which Jane now studiously paid to her noble patron, though I hoped its source was gratitude, and not the artifices of interested ambition, working its slow though sure way through gratified vanity. I suspected the *new readings* were not unfrequently old hackneyed readings, —that the sudden lights streaming upon the pages of Shakspeare or Otway, which were cast forth by the genius of the Marquis, and which Jane discerned with such pretty surprise, admiration so respectful yet so ardent, enthusiasm checked by natural modesty, as if her deepest homage were unworthy of him to whom it was offered but by starts, were at least as old as the stage lamps of Drury-lane.

I could not yet doubt the integrity of my early friend; but now that I was no longer the object of her incense myself, I soon discovered that Jane was a most accomplished flatterer, selecting her stimulants, and proportioning her doses with admirable knowledge of the mental constitution of those to whom she administered. Mean and fulsome flattery would quickly, I believed, have disgusted the Marquis,—nor would the Lady Jane have accepted the gross adulation from Jane Ford, which was agreeable enough, or which, at least, was from habit tolerated, if offered by more vulgar dependents.

The arts by which the waiting-maid, valet, or housekeeper, in great families, maintains place and influence, are not, I believe, in their principles materially different from those employed by that more exalted kind of menials termed courtiers,—namely, flattery, falsehood, meanness, backbiting, and the most pitiful intrigue; but, above all, by keeping alive jealousies, by dividing to govern. These arts, however, would not all at once have succeeded in the present instance, and Jane discovered a higher, finer *tact*,—that rare and exquisite sense lodged at

the mind's finger-ends,—in adapting her conduct to the varying aspects of events. Her main difficulty lay with the Lady Jane; and the triumph of her address was maintaining her place in the favour of the daughter, while she engrossed so much of the attention of the father. This was accomplished by keeping alive Lady Jane's jealousy of my imagined favour with the Marquis, and viewing every attention that he paid to the cultivation of her stage talent as kindness emanating from the gracious and powerful interference of his daughter.

Jane had for some time studiously avoided all private intercourse with myself, and when we were unavoidably thrown together, protestations of earnest, undiminished regard, complaints of that state of dependence which compelled her to assume feelings, and to act a part foreign to her nature, still made me pity one I could no longer wholly approve.

Though I admired her talent, I was shocked at the idea of her attempting the bold, perilous life of a common stage player. She affected to join in my fears, to feel all my repugnance to the theatrical profession, and to consider herself as the victim of a strong necessity, which my plain understanding

could not be made to comprehend. It was in devotion to the wishes of her "noble, generous benefactress," she was to attempt the arduous line of life so appalling to her modesty. "How durst she shrink from the task, for which the Marquis himself had laboured to accomplish her?" I was not the dupe of this diplomacy.

"Jane," I replied, "if your dislike of the stage is as sincere as I think it is wise and natural, there can be no reason for doing violence to your feelings. I will write to my mother, she will interfere to prevent this; you will return to your own quiet, safe, feminine occupations, if such be indeed your sincere wish. The Marquis is quite capable of appreciating your reasons for disliking this dangerous profession."

Jane's gratitude to me, her laboured explanations, her protestations, her tears, could not deceive me; I changed the subject to spare her farther meanness, and we parted coldly, Jane reproaching me even with tears, for not understanding, not doing justice to her character, not allowing for her *peculiar* position.

I now began, for many reasons, to long for the

termination of my visit. My studies with Lady Jane were interrupted, our habits of life broken up by the dramatic mania, which, if it had amused me at first, grew alarming now, for our private theatricals were become, I understood, the talk of the neighbourhood, and, from the ages and condition of the *dramatis personæ*, its jest. This I learned from my friend the housekeeper, who thought it necessary to give me a friendly caution; and also gathered from certain private nods and winks of the morning visiters, before whom Jane was occasionally called on to exhibit. A little opposition was exactly the stimulant which she seemed to suppose the Marquis required. Some of his guests had ventured to express doubts of Jane's talent; she had cleverness, address, knowledge of stage effect, they allowed, but genius in its higher sense they denied her to possess. The Lady Jane smiled at these critics; *genius* was all Jane's power, aided by the feeble help of her own instructions:—knowledge of the stage she had none,—address none,—a mere simple, bashful child in her own character. On the other hand, the Marquis and Lady Jane had their partisans, and Jane her patrons and ad-

mirers, whose judgments could not be controverted or doubted,—amateurs of high rank, qualified by inspiration or intuition to school the most gifted artist in his own profession. And now that Aulmerle House was, in some sort, turned into a green-room, noble lords, learned lawyers, and talented Members of Parliament, condescended to instruct the fair fledgeling tragedian. Jane profited by them all, if not in her art, in her interests, reconciling the most discordant and contradictory opinions and directions with admirable address.

It was in defence of his own judgment and taste, that the Marquis now, as I supposed, imagined himself bound to produce the extraordinary genius discovered by his daughter, and cultivated, as its possessor alleged, by himself. A correspondence was opened with the manager of one of the great winter theatres, who was invited down to Aulmerle House, as we concluded, to see the prodigy, together with an eminent sculptor, who was engaged to model the bust of Lady Jane, while he *inspected* and pronounced upon the *attitudes* of Jane Ford. The anxiety which the Marquis had hitherto manifested for the improvement of his daughter, was for the

time, as I thought, suspended, to accomplish his pupil for her grand *debut*, which was to take place after the Christmas holidays. There was something elevating in the idea of the ornament of the British stage proceeding from among the household attendants of a noble family; and Jane, who availed herself of every thing, now represented her own appearance in public, as herald of the advent of Lady Jane Aulmerle's brighter beauty, and higher accomplishments.

It was still, however, Jane's most difficult task to manage the pride and caprice of her noble patroness. The pride of Lady Jane, which disdained the homage of a prince, was nevertheless jealous of the attention of any human being, however humble, if directed to any one beside herself. While we remained a quiet family circle, as neither Mademoiselle nor myself were ardent admirers of Jane, and as her humility was invincible, and her address was never at fault, we got on tolerably well; but as often as the audience became more numerous, and applause excited in Jane's bosom the consciousness of superiority, her ground was lost; for the self-love of her patroness never relaxed in

its exactions, never for an instant forgot itself. Pride may be propitiated, vanity may be managed where they exist single passions, but, united in a strong degree in the same individual, the task of the flatterer becomes difficult indeed.

Cold of heart and quick of eye, the Lady Jane marked and resented the slightest dereliction of humble duty in her dependent; and the labour of weeks was thus liable to be lost by the negligence of one second. But Jane was now, I saw, in part consoled for the unsteady footing she maintained in the favour of the daughter, by daily gaining ground with the father. Here, in the country, the countenance of the Lady Jane was still necessary; but a wider, higher field was opening in London, when she could throw from her—perhaps crush, the original instrument of her advancement.

Yet if it had been possible for human forbearance, at sixteen, and the most humiliating concessions, to have enabled Miss Ford to simulate friendship with the Lady Jane she would still have saved appearances. She seemed peculiarly anxious that the Marquis should not suspect that his daughter no longer participated in his desire for

her success,—sought every occasion ostentatiously to proclaim the confidence and affection with which she was treated by the Lady Jane, and to impress on him that he obliged his daughter, when, now that the first, and all-important appearance of her *protegée* drew nigh, he devoted a part of every morning to dramatic studies, and every evening to those more public exhibitions which were to familiarize the timid, sensitive maiden, to a great audience.

The arduous study of Jane, and still more, I believe, her mental anxiety, and secret fears and forebodings of failure, in one or all of her schemes of ambition, made visible inroads on her health. Though my judgment of her character began to waver, my affection was still warm; and my representations drew the attention of the Marquis to the "poor little thing," as he called her, and he not only ordered medical advice, but saw that she attended to it, so far as relaxation from study, and daily exercise were prescribed. She was to go abroad every day with Lady Jane and the governess, in the carriage; but by ill-temper or caprice in Mademoiselle or her pupil, these

orders were neglected; and the Marquis, indignant at their ungenerous and careless treatment of the sickly girl, made a point that she should accompany them. While kindness had been a voluntarily act of grace and favour, the Lady Jane, so far as her character was capable of consistent kindness, had not been remiss; but as a duty, commanded by her father, from her to her own creature!—hér proud glance might have annihilated the little trembling girl on whom it fell.

The Marquis would be obeyed; and as the Lady Jane now declined going abroad at all, I was summoned to accompany him and Jane Ford, on the customary airing. If I had been disgusted with the pride and ill-temper of Lady Jane, I was startled with the new character in which Jane Ford broke forth upon me. Consummate hypocrite as she was, she was not yet sufficiently practised to be able to disguise her exultation in the triumph the Marquis had openly given her over his daughter, and was thus betrayed into a freedom, airiness, and pretty petulance of manner, which from her to the Most Noble the Marquis of Aulmerle confounded and frightened me. The play-

fulness, the gaiety, the roguish simplicity of the young creature, so highly gifted, and so seemingly unconscious of her own wonderful powers, possessed, I sagaciously perceived, an indescribable fascination for her good-natured, unoccupied patron, which daily became the stronger from the contrast of his daughter's imperious temper and obstinate pride, and Mademoiselle's absurdity. She was the only creature in the house, he said, that tried to amuse him; "Little Jane had grown as grave as a dormouse, while Jane Ford had brightened into a most agreeable, sprightly little coquette."

I could not help remarking, that the Marquis was much more attentive to Jane, and more disposed to flirtation before company, than when we were alone; while the fair actress, though she no longer found it necessary or convenient to maintain disguise before me, the instant any fourth party joined us, relapsed into the gentle, diffident, demure maiden,—the passive yet intelligent and most grateful instrument in the generous hands that were fashioning her to fame and fortune. Though offended by the flattery and artifice in which I now plainly perceived Jane had advanced another stage,

having so far cautiously felt her way, I respected the delicacy which made her still shrink from receiving the gallant attentions of the father in presence of his young daughter; and my anger was directed against the Marquis, who, strange to say, studiously, at such times, pressed his gallantries upon her. My reluctance to make a third in the daily airings was now evident, but the Marquis would not dispense with my attendance on my friend, though, on more than one occasion, it had been obvious that "my friend" had manœuvred to leave me behind.

If Lady Jane had hoped that her obstinacy would wear out her father's patience, she was mistaken; day after day she declined going abroad with him and Jane, and each day her place was duly supplied. One day she bethought her of desiring me to remain at home with her, complaining of a cold, and expecting, I presume, to break up, or at least suspend, for one day, the customary arrangements. To our mutual mortification the Marquis at once acquiesced. He gravely felt his daughter's pulse, and examined her tongue.

"Ay, you are very bad indeed, Jane; but I

hope your blood will get cooler by and by. I must be content for a morning to spout Romeo to our little Juliet, without audience. I wish to visit the Pendarves; but you, lovely Juliet, can sit in the carriage while I make my short call;" and so saying, he gallantly handed out Miss Ford, her exultation ill concealed by protestations of anxiety to be permitted to remain with Lady Jane, "to amuse and nurse her."

"Lady Jane is not yet of the age to lack amusements and nurses," said the Marquis; "there will be more kindness, and Jane will be more obliged to you for continuing to amuse and nurse her papa. *Allons-nous, aimable Juliette.*"

Lady Jane changed colour several times; she rose and walked to the window, and seated herself there with a disturbed air. The first words she spoke were, "There is the Pendarves' carriage, *they* must have passed it." And she rung, ordering herself to be denied, if inquired for, too much agitated to receive guests. Then turning to me, as if pursuing the course of her own thoughts, she said, "What do you think of all this, Jane,—is my father mad?" I made no reply. "Or a fool?"

added she, more vehemently; "yes, a doating, infatuated fool, the pitiful dupe of the lowest, basest arts."

"I don't believe," I said, "the Marquis will marry *her*," and I gasped as the dreadful word inadvertently escaped my lips. "Marry her!" exclaimed Lady Jane, in astonishment; "but is it not insulting enough that he should choose for his mistress, a girl who has been, though in a menial rank, about me, his daughter." I believe my face was sufficiently expressive of my alarm, and horror of the opinions and morals of the great, at the education which had taught the young daughter to estimate the guilt of the father only as it affected her own pride. Our conversation, which I was unable to maintain, was suspended by Mrs. Pendarves alighting to visit the housekeeper, for the alleged purpose of having her sandal strap repaired, but with the real intention, Lady Jane said, of a gossip with Mrs. White. The moment her carriage drove off, Mrs. White was summoned with her valetudinary supplies of chicken broth, to Lady Jane's dressing-room, and I was requested to remain.

"I am glad to find you here, Miss Jane," said the matron, who had been the Lady Jane's mother's waiting-maid, and, from habit and situation, felt stronger affection for the haughty lady than her conduct deserved.

"Ay, if I am to believe you, White, Miss Jane Harding is not one of my *spoilers* and *flatterers*," and the lady forced a smile. "But what piece of scandal has the Honourable Pendarves to circulate to-day,—or to glean for to-morrrow's expenditure?"

"People will talk, my lady, ay, even those who have less right than Mrs. Pendarves,—ay, very impertinently. She is an old friend of the family, and a free-spoken, spirited lady."

"Quite aware of all that, Mrs. White; but to what did her free, friendly spirit give vent today?"

"That, if it must be told, might not be so pleasant for me to speak, nor for you to hear, my lady, —only I wish some people had sooner known their friends from their flatterers. We are here all among friends. You are my late lady's only

child, Lady Jane, and, no doubt, my lord is as fond and as proud of you too, as becomes him; but to speak it plain, fathers are but men, and, if daughters are wilful, will have their own way;—fair means may guide where force won't drive them. My lord, to be sure, is but a young man still, barely forty-three; and the title;" —— but here the Lady Jane broke in with anger; "You dare not tell me so!" The housekeeper, somewhat offended, replied, "It is, to be sure, no business of mine;"—and Lady Jane more calmly continued, "Tell us what they say, White; you know I do not regard —that is seriously regard—all this tattle."

"Tattle is the very word, my lady, for sure it is all tattle. 'Which of these pretty girls is to be your Marchioness?' says Mrs. Pendarves to me, laughing. 'I say some of the Miss Rectors, but Pendarves says it is the little Juliet,—a new Polly Fenton, or Farren over again, are we to have?' "

Lady Jane stared from the housekeeper to me; her colour which had been raised many shades, suddenly paling; she tried to rally her spirits, and said, with forced gaiety, "And has Jane Harding

no chance, among all these competitors, for a coronet; she is past sixteen, and an inch taller than the little Juliet."

"No body seems to have thought of Miss Jane, my lady; she, to be sure, is a child yet, though she will, by and by, be a fine woman. If the Harding family refused their Miss Caroline to our Marquis, Mrs. Clements, that now is, my lady, I fear they won't give us Miss Jane now."

The eyes of Lady Jane again sought mine in astonishment. "Refuse the Marquis of Aulmerle!" she exclaimed. "Yes, indeed, my lady; it *was* wonderful; but Miss Caroline preferred young Clements, and her father and mother thought him a far better, that is a more suitable—for nobody to be sure could be better than my lord—match for her, my lady, more respectable for them all—more likely to make Miss Carry happy." Lady Jane looked indignant surprise. "Such miracles can never happen twice," said she. "I hope Miss Jane would, in the same circumstances, shew nobler ambition, than it seems Miss Caroline did." She looked at me for reply.

I was offended,—and I also, I fear, felt more

pride in the magnanimous disregard my friends had shown to rank and title, than in their true wisdom and moderation. "It is of little use to speculate on what Miss Jane might do," I returned; "she is a young girl going back to her own humble home, with a better opinion of her own condition of life than she could ever have gathered, had she not seen the interior movements of a loftier state."

"Do you then, Jane, really not envy me?" cried Lady Jane hastily, and in a very natural manner. "Do you not believe *us* happier than your own *caste?*—Indeed you have, I fear, little true cause. Perhaps it had been better for me not to be born so great, or so rich rather, as to be corrupted by flatterers; though even that is happier than being thrown so low in place, as to become the mean, fawning, sycophant hanger-on of the great,—loathed and despised by those to please whom the base creatures degrade themselves."

These were novel doctrines for Lady Jane, and though I could perceive no necessary connexion between wealth and corruption, poverty and meanness of mind, I let them pass. I was, indeed,

somewhat surprised at the shrewdness, as well as at the unexpected frankness of my young name-mother, and I suppose my face betrayed as much, for she continued, "Yes, Jane, I may not always have used you well, or kindly, though I must say you have sometimes stickled quite as much on your independence as I have done on my prerogative; but I have always respected, and now that I know you better, I value your character,—ay, even your sturdy independence, since I have seen it in contrast with the self-interested, parasitical complaisance of another. Miss Ford thinks herself very cunning—so she is; but some clever person says, one may be more cunning than any one, but not so cunning as every one. But three weeks ago, while she was thought to have no personal interest in making herself so popular among us, and she was the general favourite of the whole household; now——but what do I say, her degree of favour must rest with her present patron,—vile, servile, degraded wretches, who from infancy have pampered my pride!—let that despicable girl be but for one hour my father's wife, or mistress, and they will fawn on her more meanly than they ever did upon me."

Notwithstanding what I heard and observed myself, I would have told Lady Jane that the gossip of the servants and the neighbours had induced her to form hasty opinions, and to draw erroneous conclusions; and that her father's strong affection for herself, and regard to his own honour and happiness, made her suspicions exceedingly improbable; but she burst away from me to conceal the rebel tears, which her pride would not suffer any eye to perceive streaming over her cheeks, from such a cause. In a few minutes afterwards she came to my door, and invited me to walk with her. As the subject of our late conversation was not renewed by herself, I did not venture to approach it.

At a late hour we saw the carriage returning; and, by one of those spells over reason which forces us into the presence of what we hate, Lady Jane hurried back to the house. The servant who let down the carriage-steps winked *knowingly* to his liveried compeers in the hall, as the Marquis gallantly, and apparently in high spirits, handed out Jane Ford. The Lady Jane, whose eye nothing escaped, perceived this impudent mark of intelligence among the domestics;—it was as the last

drop in the cup of wrath. With an air of insuperable haughtiness she stood to receive Jane, who, gently bending forward, whispered her confused and humble thanks to the daughter for the benevolent condescension of the father, shewn in his attention to her health. "She was so much the better for her airing;" and she then moved as if to take the shawl off Lady Jane to carry up stairs. I saw and trembled for the bursting of the storm which gathered to the high, bold brow of Lady Jane,—the tyrant, the termagant, but too proud to be the hypocrite, even where her dearest interests demanded disguise. She firmly held her shawl, wrapped it rapidly round her arm, as if to form a target, on which she was to receive the attack of an enemy, and haughtily waited the approach of her father, as if it were he alone she stooped to confront. He was caressing a spaniel that leaped upon him, and paid no more attention to her airs and movements than if she had been fifty miles off. Having failed to catch his eye, she addressed Jane, saying, "Nay, prithee, good Mistress Jane, permit me to bear my shawl myself. Since you have passed into the service of Melpomene,

or some less creditable employer, Thalia, or some one as properly qualified, must find me another waiting-gentlewoman. Our tragedy becomes farce at last, my lord." She swept away; the Marquis now looking up and following her steps with an expression of face which baffled me. Jane Ford, to my utter astonishment, hastily followed, as if to deprecate the resentment and anger of her patroness.

The almost comic face that the Marquis turned on me—the wide round eyes he made—the sort of internal whistle, were motions more expressive than elegant. I thought him most unfeeling; and, I suppose, assumed the proper air of offended virtue, for he turned from me, laughing, and saying, "Cinderella also gone mad." This was his usual pet name for myself, but I resented the familiarity of it at this time.

I was aware that Jane Ford had been denied admittance to the chamber of Lady Jane, who soon joined me in the drawing-room. I saw that she had been weeping; and, for once, Mademoiselle was seated near her, whispering consolation, to which no attention was paid. I now looked on my noble

young godmother with deep interest and compassion. If she had few amiable dispositions, she had some high qualities of mind; her worst faults were more those of circumstances than of her nature; and her cruel father was about to degrade himself, and to break her heart, ruin her prospects, and disappoint all her splendid expectations of fortune; to reduce her to a lord's mere portionless daughter, by forming a connexion with one who had stolen into his affections by low cunning and flattery, and who had shewn herself more unworthy of him in character than unsuitable in years and rank. While I wept Jane Ford's ambition and duplicity, I pitied the Lady Jane, and detested her father.

I was quite sensible that any attempt to establish confidence between us, which did not originate with Lady Jane herself, exposed me to haughty repulse; yet I could not help approaching her, whispering, "You are still too much indisposed to leave your room, Lady Jane; you look heated and feverish."

"Yes, Jane, heated and fevered by warming vipers in my bosom, to poison or sting me."

"*Mon Dieu, oui!* vipers, serpangs, Mademoiselle Harding," cried the governess.

"Yes, Jane, I think I am not well; yet my father never once asked me how I did on his return, —never even looked where I stood; but I am prepared for every thing." Not one of us, I believe, however, was prepared for what followed. The door was flung open, and young Pendarves entered, followed by the Marquis, and, hanging on his arm, very fashionably dressed, and wearing pearl ornaments, —Jane Ford! She had never yet—even in their most gracious times—sat at table with Lady Jane, though she had oftener shared her suppers and luncheons in her dressing-room, when all the world was shut out, than her ladyship liked to think of now.

Jane looked much agitated, and there was no feigning about her at this time. She trembled from head to foot, and appeared ready to sink on the floor. The Marquis led her directly up to the sofa on which his daughter was seated. "I have the honour to present Miss Ford to you, Lady Jane; I owe the knowledge of many of her talents and amiable qua-

lities to yourself, particularly of that sweetness of temper which I consider the chief charm of your sex.—A lady, Mademoiselle," and he turned to the governess, " who will so soon have the honour to appear before the Royal Family and nobility of England, is no longer in her own place at my second table. I consider Miss Ford a distinguished guest in this family."

Mademoiselle blew out like a turkey cock; Lady Jane became of a leaden hue, and then the checked blood rushed in torrents to her face. Her impulse seemed to be war—open war—war to the knife's point, but her pride checked her impetuosity; she sunk into one of her " silent rages," and the depth of her mock reverence gave the measure of her contempt. Never did young votaress of the Tragic Muse bend more humbly before all the gods and goddesses, than did Jane Ford before the throne of the Lady Jane, casting up her tearful eyes in a sidelong imploring glance, which swam round the circle, but finally rested on the Marquis, with a witchery of entreaty and a fascination which was irresistible. He came instantly

as if to her support; and though I half pitied Jane, the victim of her own ambition, I became more and more indignant at the cool, calm way in which the Marquis, while he apparently directed his attentions to the actress, scrutinized the movements and looks of his daughter. Her emotion was too powerful to be concealed, but she evidently struggled with her feelings, and even attempted to laugh and chat with Mademoiselle and myself. Pendarves directed his homage on this day to the shrine of the favourite, and receiving the relation of the long airing of that morning, chalked out a yet more delightful route for to-morrow,—inviting the "agreeable companions in a post chariot" to lunch at his mother's on their drive.

The footman who had winked so knowingly in the hall, now announced dinner with a face of the most imperturbable gravity—or rather of no meaning—that could be desired in a machine of his description. "Verily, you great folks, your dependents and menials, are a strange people," I thought.

Lady Jane, resenting the conduct of Pendarves, took the arm of her governess, for the first time in

her life to my knowledge, and brushed off, lest her own father, and his fair companion, had taken precedence of her.

The Lyons silks of Mademoiselle rustled portentously on the stairs as they proceeded; her personal dignity was compromised in that of her noble pupil, whose patrician and English wrath was as a halcyon calm, compared with the sputtering rage of the governess. I shuffled on with young Pendarves, wondering where all this was to end, and heartily wishing I were that day to dine at home on mutton, off blue stoneware, in a room fifteen feet by twenty-one, instead of sitting in the saloon of Aulmerle House, with venison, and a service of gold-plate. Such a dinner! The Marquis and Mr. Pendarves alone appeared at their ease. They drank wine with each of us in turn, beginning with Miss Ford, for whom some particular sort of wine of boasted flavour was ordered from the head butler by the Marquis. Both gentlemen, I fear, enjoyed the affronted airs of Mademoiselle, my own embarrassed looks, the proud scorn of Lady Jane, and the demure, but scarce concealed consciousness of the Queen of the feast. While the Marquis gallantly handed her to

the door, he affected to chide Lady Jane for so soon leaving the table, and recommenced the flirtation he had carried on at intervals all day. Flirt with Jane Ford before his daughter's face! How indignant I became. He no longer, then, wished to conceal his doating folly; it was unblushingly proclaimed.

If Jane Ford had seemed to triumph in the dining-room, the Lady Jane's turn came now. She took an arm of her governess, and another of myself, and planting us on each side of her, never once directed look or word to her late favourite. Jane made several approaches to conversation—to explanation—of which she was at all times fond—to compliments, but was alike unsuccessful in all; and, notwithstanding her confidence and self-possession, she was forced to abandon the field, as I fancied. Jane, however, made better use of her time in repairing her arms for renewed combat. As soon as she left us Mademoiselle broke forth, and Lady Jane followed her example; and I had one specimen of the way in which persons familiar to petty intrigues construe things of no meaning into serious affairs, magnify trifles, and distort facts.

"Monsieur Pendaraf, entre the *salon* before her," said Mademoiselle.—"Yes, some spirit in that," replied Lady Jane. "You noticed Harrison ordered to bring the Constantia, the wine we never use but for high company and favourite ladies. It appears the 'Marchioness' is to be presented immediately. 'The Royal Family and nobility,'—did not you notice that, Jane?"

"I fancied that meant her appearance in the playhouse."

"O, no,—no such thing; but it will take two words to that, I can tell *him*. The Queen won't receive her, I am certain.—Heavens, am I in a dream!" she exclaimed in a very different tone. "Have I lost for ever the affections of my father, —the only being, save yourself, Jane, that ever cared for me!—has he given that girl the place in his heart of which I never, till this day, knew the value! Her sweet temper!—and mine"——She burst into an agony of tears,—pushing back Mademoiselle with one hand, while she covered her face with the other. I could not even attempt to console, but Mademoiselle was indefatigable,—with both hands she administered *eau de Cologne;*

with both tongues—for the Marquis said she always in a hurry spoke double—solemn, comforting assurances that Jane Ford's pearls were only Roman, if the necklace was not Paris paste. Lady Jane did not deign to notice this characteristic piece of consolation but by one of her superb looks. On seeing my eye watchfully fixed upon her, with somewhat of the regard the mad doctor bestows on his patient under a rising paroxysm, she subdued or smothered the fit, saying, as soon as she could command voice, "Do not think me so mean as to regard the mere loss of fortune;—I may feel it, but that is not my present grief:—shall that paltry girl take *my* place in this house—*my* place in my father's heart—*my* place in public consideration!—I shall go mad!" I was truly sorry for Lady Jane, but I could not help thinking, "It will be better that you grow reasonable." We heard the Marquis and young Pendarves coming laughing up stairs, and we all three hurried through the back drawing-room, and retreated to renew the conference in Lady Jane's dressing-closet.

Lady Jane's pride would not permit her to be long absent from the scene of defiance or combat,

especially as we were informed that other gentlemen had arrived to a late dinner, after we left the dining-room, and were to be visiters for some time. She accordingly adjusted her dress, and bathed her eyes; and as the evening was uncommonly fine for the season, promised to join me in a few minutes, for a composing stroll, ere we bravely appeared together before the strangers, witnesses of one of Jane Ford's most arduous exhibitions, and the farther infatuation of the Marquis. The exhibition was to take place in the picture gallery; and screens, and a few rude scenes were placed there to favour stage illusion.

When we entered this gallery we found several gentlemen walking about, and among others the sculptor who was to model the bust of Lady Jane. He was an intimate friend of my father's, who from childhood had distinguished me with playful kindness, and as I had grown up, with a portion of the affection naturally felt for the daughter of an old friend who shewed herself anxious to please him and to merit his regard. Our meeting was the happiest event that had occurred to me for weeks past. He led me about, examining the pictures,

while I pointed out the views to him. He at once recognised Jane Ford, and looked sharply, and, I thought, peculiarly hard at her. I told him that was the young candidate for the honours of the buskin, and reminded him of his having seen her before. "Ha! so I have," he said, "and very recently too, or I am mistaken."

I was somewhat surprised when young Pendarves soon afterwards joined us, Jane Ford hanging on his arm! The Lady Jane, rearing her head, accepted the arm of my old friend, and we stood together admiring a picture of Lady Jane Grey, that model and idol of all clever school girls. There was a present interest attached to this picture. The Marquis, before the age when politics or fashion engross the whole young man, had been a dabbler in literature. At Oxford he had sketched a tragedy, of which the subject was this princess. It had been presented to the dowager, his mother, by the young man's tutor, as a peace-offering and proof of application and scholarship on some occasion, and had slept amidst the other lumber of the deceased lady's repositories, till incidentally heard of by Jane Ford. She had never rested till

it was rescued from the dust and moths; and it was in this piece she vowed she should appear, if she ever appeared. The beauty of the play must of itself ensure the success of the actor,—she and the tragedy would stand or fall together!

Mr. Pendarves was solicited to bring the piece into a *presentable* state, and it was expected that the new-arrived player would adapt it to the stage. The dress of the picture was to be as exactly copied by the heroine of the play as was consistent with modern taste.

The picture might be a likeness or not; it was at any rate a reputed original, and represented a very beautiful girl; sweet, serene, tenderly youthful, yet dignified in her expression, the girlish countenance touched with sadness, and illumined by genius, the whole piece the embodied dream of some divine old painter. The Italian style of the head, and the knot of passion-flowers, exquisitely painted, together with a rosary and crucifix, gave no indication of the Lady Jane Grey; but however that might be, the soft, pale, thoughtful countenance bore not the most distant or shadowy resemblance to the face of living roses and lilies, of the fair, high-

blooded Jane Aulmerle; yet Miss Ford, as a last bold stroke, in an audible whisper to Mr. Pendarves, conveyed her rapturous recognition of the likeness.

"How beautiful! how very striking! Pray, Lady Jane, are your family descended from the Lady Jane Grey?"—I had some curiosity to see how this query would be received, and this advance rebuffed:—there was a compromise between struggling pride and vanity. "I daresay we may have been some way connected," she replied coldly and haughtily.

"Don't you perceive the likeness, Mr. Pendarves?—are you not struck with it?" continued Jane Ford.

"Very much indeed,—but did you never know, Miss Ford, that Lady Jane Grey was the Marquis's great-grandmother?" Miss Ford affected to laugh,—and he proceeded, "Why this is a deep, grey-eyed, dark-haired Madonna;—very like the Aulmerle family face that."

Miss Ford perceived that she was ridiculed, and attempting to rally, she whispered confidentially in the reputed lover's ear, "I have understood that *our* Lady Jane's grandmother took this princess

as her model in the education of her charming grand-daughter. Her education has been *learned*, and yet entirely domestic."—"Entirely *domestic* I believe," said Pendarves, "*our* Lady Jane's education has been, as is often visible in her gentle, amiable manners."

The blood mounted higher in the face of Jane Aulmerle,—Pendarves' sarcastic emphasis on the word *domestic*, and Jane Ford's audacious possessive pronoun, were more than her pride could tolerate. Her lips quivered in emotion, while she proudly reared her neck, and tossed back the curls from her glowing temples, as the untamed colt tosses its flowing mane. No beautiful young woman could at this moment less resemble another of the same *blooming* age than she now did the reputed picture of the Lady Jane Grey.

My friend the sculptor, I imagine, perceived her feelings, and he charitably said, "I don't suppose this picture intended for Jane Grey at all; but if it be, don't, I entreat you, Lady Jane, in the least resemble that cold-blooded, pedantic, little monster, who liked her books better than her play

—better than her lover—and went to death upon a school exercise. Pray, how does my lord manage the catastrophe of his tragedy? How is the young and noble Dudley engaged, while his pedantic little wife scrawls in her table-book that precious record of her scholarship, so proudly handed down to posterity?"

"He solves a problem in the higher geometry," said Pendarves gravely.

"It is not thus Shakspeare's heroine could have been employed, while her arms could have wound and clung around the noble Dudley, the youthful husband, about to be dragged from them to the scaffold," continued the sculptor.

"I am sure, Miss Ford's genius would be better manifested in a twining, clinging scene of passion, than in penning Jane Grey's famous sentence in Latin, Greek, and English," said Pendarves, who dealt his blows pretty severely, but only put them in with love where the pride of Lady Jane became his mark. "But what thinks *our* Lady Jane?" he continued turning to her. "What an accumulation of heresy against traditionary opinion!—

What a deathblow to 'the beautiful character' of the Marquis's heroine, and grandmamma's model, Mr. —— has just dealt!"

The young lady again reared and tossed her head, muttering "impertinence!" Jane Ford, whose maxims was to be all things to all men, if she might catch one, now simpered, "We won't allow ridicule to be the test of truth, however wittily it be applied,"—and as the Marquis approached, "Genius can find its own materials, as well as embellish them. Mind I prophesy the success of this very scene." There was, of course, no such catastrophe in this tragedy, by "a person of quality," bald as the performance was. The Marquis laughed very heartily when informed of what had passed, and thanked Jane for her stanch support.

The dramatic exhibitions were now about to begin, and the mortified Lady Jane drew me into a deep window recess, where, placing herself behind a screen, we could see and hear without being observed. I had been requested, by my friend the sculptor, to copy a sketch which he had made for a bookcase, intended he said for a lady's dressing-room, and in the form of an organ. I set

to work to accomplish my task, and having cut my pencils he left us.

"I was sick of theatricals even before to-night, and am heart-sick now," said Lady Jane languidly. I was equally tired of them; and, I believe, if truth must be told, of acting nobody, or secondary to my old companion Jane Ford.

"That is a beautiful design, Jane. I presume it is for an ornament to the Marchioness's dressing-room." This was bitterly said. "Can you conceive anything so cruel and insulting as the conduct of my father to-day,—'and *her* sweet temper,'—what meant he by that?—Does my father conceive that I can,—does he think that I ought to fawn, and flatter, and cozen, and use the blandishments of a courtezan with those about me, like that low girl."

"I am certain my lord does not," I replied, a little amused to find how deeply conscience had sent the sharp phrase into the stricken heart of the young lady. "Sweetness of temper and artful blandishment are surely very opposite qualities, Lady Jane." Our conversation was suspended by the player, and the sculptor, with young Pen-

darves, and his tutor, taking their places immediately outside our sanctuary, in order that from this distant point they might judge the better of "the little Juliet's" voice and attitudes, than while crowding round her.

"It is a face which baffles me, with all my boasted physiognomic skill," said my friend the sculptor; and I knew that he spoke of Miss Ford, and would have let him understand he was overheard, but that Lady Jane commanded me, by significant gestures, to sit still and be silent. "It is a remarkable countenance for a girl," said Mr. Pendarves' tutor, the early friend of the Marquis, and supposed to be much in his confidence.

"Nay, it is positively beautiful," added the sculptor. "More sweet, composed duplicity I never saw, in so young a face; or a more subtle and refined expression of something too intellectual for mere cunning, yet too contracted for true wisdom. If I were, in the French style of art, to personify qualities, I should choose Miss Ford to represent *Finesse*; some artists might call their picture when finished, *Fascination*."

"Or female Ambition in its teens," said the

other gentleman,—not altogether insensible to girlish tastes, yet too soaring and expansive for the ordinary gratifications of coxcomb admirers, trinkets, and new caps."

"Sweet duplicity,—'I thank the Jew for that word,'" was said in the gay voice of Pendarves,—and the Lady Jane most earnestly, by looks and gestures, importuned me to remain quiet. "What a little Machiavel it would be, if it knew how. See how the sweet burden hangs so lovingly helpless on the arm of the Marquis—that is of her 'Jaffier,' for to the Marquis of Aulmerle she would not raise her eyes for worlds, while, in fit time and place, it is as impudent a little bit of mischief as a man could desire to meet with."

The eyes of Lady Jane flashed on me a rapid, bold commentary on the welcome remarks of Pendarves. "I hope you elderly gentlemen, still in the 'prime of life,' in the very 'flower of your age,' between forty and fifty, will allow that we boys do not monopolize all folly:—or do you reach a second epoch, in which, forgetting the tricks of the sex, you become dupes afresh?" Lady Jane was evidently delighted with these strictures, as she

signified to me by her vivacious looks and gestures.

"The Marquis, I presume, finds amusement in the trickery of his fair pupil, perhaps delight in her talents," said the tutor. "I am, however, astonished that his daughter, with her pride and egotism, endures so much nonsense of any kind in which she does not bear the chief part herself. Lately she was her father's idol. It may be of advantage to the young lady to discover, before it be too late, that fortune has power even over her high estate. It would be a blessing to herself and her friends, to see the spoiled, overbearing, tyrannical heiress, tamed down to a reasonable young woman, before it be too late."

I durst not raise my eyes to Lady Jane, but I moved as if to get away, she, however, more vehemently than before, pushed me down; and thus awkwardly we remained during the following conversation.

"The Marquis, notwithstanding your sneer at 'us youth,' Pendarves, is still what, in the English Hymen's calendar, is reckoned a young man."

"I dare swear Miss Ford wishes him ten, or

twenty years older, which would only make her doubtful game so much the more sure," said the sculptor,—" yes, yes,—youth, beauty, delicious flattery, unwearied complaisance, free opportunity for the gradual, sure operation of the machinery she manages with such admirable skill,—yes, yes, such miracles are every day seen in England."

" 'Pon my soul," cried the actor,—influenced probably by a slight degree of professional feeling, —" who after all can blame him?—the gentle, soft, ingratiating manners of a lovely, talented girl, contrasted every hour, and at every turn, with the sullen pride, and supercilious indifference of the daughter, to whose attentions and gratitude he has so strong a claim. This young lady, who owes the greater part of her consequence to her father remaining a widower, looks on us, his friends, as dirt beneath her feet. I don't suppose you could find a better specimen of ignorant pride in any little court of the German empire than the Lady Jane Aulmerle."

" Why, if the Marquis give his daughter a lesson and a stepdame, I for one shall applaud him,"

cried Pendarves,—" only I hope, for his own sake, it won't be through this exquisite bit of fascination and artifice."

" Lady Jane keeps so many fair, accomplished toad-eaters about her, that her papa need be at no loss to pick and choose," said the actor; and I felt my cheeks glow at the sarcasm, in which, I feared, I might be included,—for was not I one of those appendages of rank, one of those *nobodies*, tolerated in great houses, while they flatter or amuse the *somebodies*, invited on whim, and retained by sufferance, if at all. I had no leisure to pursue a train of thought so mortifying to my pride, for young Pendarves cried, " Hush!—we must be prepared to applaud now,—Belvidera is winding up for a grand effect. But what do you think of her tragedy?"

" All a humbug, believe me; her tragedy and comedy are, I suspect, like herself," replied my friend the sculptor.

" Do you then, a town-bred critic, not think the girl has talents for the stage?"

" Why yes, the talents of ten thousand girls now in London, and of five hundred in smaller places;

—she has youth, figure, voice, all tolerably fair,—and, which is better, the improved tact of a girl who has seen a great deal of the inside of play-houses, and such sort of places, and made clever use of her eyes and other senses."

"I am concerned," said Mr. Charlton, the tutor of Pendarves, to the player, "to see the Marquis encourage this poor girl in a profession in which, it seems, she has not much, or at least no certain chance of success,—a profession so full of hazard to every female, if it be not fraught with certain ruin."

"Perhaps so," returned the player, in a tone of indifference; "yet she is well patronized; the humbug, if it be found such, may take for a while; once in about three years such things succeed, and so she nets a few thousands, and perhaps a husband into the bargain. The thirty thousand pound prize of a coronet casts up to our theatrical ladies at some rare times."

"Yes, about once in fifty years on the average," said the tutor, "from the age of Nell Gywn downwards; but in the same period how many hundreds and thousands of poor, vain girls have been hurried on to ruin and misery, by the same flowery,

alluring path; and far am I from believing, that even the fortunate few who gain the great prize always escape the misery. If Lady Jane would give her client the sum she must advance for her new dresses, and send her back to her needle, how much more essential a service would she and her father render to this ambitious, clever, and, I fear, weak-principled girl, who will infallibly overshoot her aim."

The Lady Jane looked on me with triumph, her eyes sparkling. I could not sympathize in her feelings. It was of the playmate of my childhood, that this sensible and benevolent man thus spoke with concern and pity, at the same moment when, in her own estimation, she was fast approaching the zenith of fame, and the most enviable of her sex.

"I never see a young girl make her *debut*, as we term it," he continued, "without my heart yearning for her. If she has no real talent it is bad, and if she does possess genius, why it is so much the worse; for when was ever the divine essence separated from the delicacy, the diffidence, and

the pride, which, in woman on the stage, must make the possessor only more alive to her humiliation. Yes, I do hate those *debuts;* I wonder if the poor girl has no home, no humble father's fireside to shelter her youth.—And beyond those stage-lamps, what a vista opens to me—vanity, heart-burning, professional rivals, pecuniary struggles, pitiful intrigues to maintain professional reputation,—if not, as too often chances, vice, infamy, premature old age, contempt and beggary."

While these words were still ringing in my ears, there came the burst of applause of Jane's performance from a more distant part of the gallery; and the gentlemen hurriedly walked away to see her *die*, leaving Lady Jane and myself, with each of us abundant subject for thought. It was thus, then, the good and the wise reckoned of Jane Ford's dazzling prospects of theatrical fame, and of her ambitious hopes and intrigues, in more private life. Something like this had been before suggested by my own vague, unaided reflections, and was perhaps the secret consolation of my vanity, for the neglect I suffered while my early com-

passion, with her hollow virtues, her superficial, showy talents, and consummate art, threw me into the shade.

Lady Jane and myself escaped from the gallery without again encountering the gentlemen.

"Nay, do not yet leave me, Jane," she said; "these free-spoken gentlemen appear to entertain a very agreeable and flattering opinion of my character and temper, I find."

"The old adage holds, Lady Jane, of both of us; —listeners, you know—"

Though painful in the passing time, I was now glad that Lady Jane had heard important truths which I could not have told her, and doubly rejoiced to see that she bore them with some patience, and thought more of the opinions expressed of herself than of the triumph afforded by the exposure of one who might be called her rival.

While we were together, Mademoiselle joined us. She had been an eye-witness of the dramatic exhibition in the gallery, and of *les petits soins* of the Marquis, publicly and studiously paid to his young favourite; and, now, as if Lady Jane had been an injured angel of light, she railed at the cruelty of

her father, and vowed that she and her pupil should never sleep one night under the same roof with the new-made Marchioness, or by their presence countenance such degradation and *mesalliance*. If Lady Jane had not so good a temper, she had a better understanding than her governess; her pride, also, at this time, resented the freedom with which the Frenchwoman spoke of her father, indignant as she was herself at his conduct. "But whither do you propose to go, Mademoiselle?" said she coldly; and I could not refrain from smiling at the characteristic reply: "Go, go, go,—*Mon Dieu*, go!" and Mademoiselle threw up her hands. The Lady Jane turned away her head in disdainful pity of her inconsequential, absurd instructress.

"Is it certain, after all," I said, "that the Marquis entertains any serious thoughts such as we impute to him? Who, for instance, from those gentlemen's compliments to Miss Ford to-night, could discover their real thoughts of her."

"But too certain, Jane; everything points one way. Mrs. White tells me she is ordered to send off some of the plate to be newly fashioned. My mother's dressing-room is to be newly papered and

furnished,—and for such an inmate! a new carriage and liveries are ordered, and for such a purpose!—No, no, it is no longer of myself I think, but of my father; how can I open his eyes, how avert the consequences of his infatuation. May I talk with him, think you?" I thought she might, if she could command her temper, and not give way to her feelings; and she requested that I would remain with her, but to this I would not consent: there was painful indelicacy in a stranger witnessing an interview between a father and daughter, where such interests were to be discussed. I hurried to my room, and hastily, and in warm indignation, wrote to my mother, saying, in general terms, that I entreated to be taken home immediately, as the marriage the Marquis was about to contract, made it painful and even disgraceful to be within fifty miles of his house, or in any way a witness of his folly, and of the misery he was inflicting on his only child.

I had scarcely finished my letter, when Jane Ford herself entered my apartment. She wore the dress of the Lady Jane Grey, which had just been brought from London, and now appeared in high

spirits, her naturally pale complexion embellished by the animation of her mind. "Where have you hid yourself, Jane?" she cried. "Why were not you a witness of my performance; you know how anxious I always am for your opinion?"

"Of yourself, or your acting, Jane,—or of both?" I returned.

"O! of course, both, but the acting to-night—Do you sup with *us* down stairs?"

"No."

"Pendarves and I are to try a scene or two in 'THE WAY TO KEEP HIM.'"—I bowed.—"Nay, Jane, I see I have offended you; occupied as I have been of late, you know it was quite impossible I could shew you that degree of attention which I wished; but I may yet be mistress of my time, and of myself, and I have not a heart that forgets its friends." I could only bow in requittal of this gracious declaration. I saw that Jane had at last forgotten herself, that the intoxication of gratified vanity had either lulled her vigilant circumspection, or that she had reached the point in her career of ambition, which made her conceive farther dissimulation unnecessary. My manners were so

constrained, that the discourse lagged in spite of Jane's self-possession. "You have left Lady Jane," said she, at last; "I hope her ladyship's cold, or rather her *heat* has abated since dinner. How much reason do I now find to join in your sentiments of that girl's character. You nurse her cold, but, I perceive, leave her to nurse her *heat* alone."

"I left Lady Jane with her father," I said. Jane retorted my words in a tone of surprise and alarm. "What has he to say to her to-night?"

"Is it so wonderful a father should give some few minutes to his daughter; were it but to hear that she is sincerely contrite for failing in her duty to him, desirous, above every thing, to maintain her place in his affections, which she dreads having forfeited."

"Desirous to ruin me in the esteem of my lord!" exclaimed my agitated visiter; "ay, that is it,—determined to destroy me, because no degree of human forbearance can propitiate her intolerable pride, no degree of submission soften her unrelenting temper. What I have endured to gain the confidence and good-will of that girl! and how is my labour lost!"

I could almost have smiled at the gross and even ludicrous self-delusion which made Jane imagine her interested flattery, and mean compliances, friendship and affection ill and ungratefully requited.

"Ruin you, Jane!" I said; "I trust no such thing is in her power, though she were wicked enough to form such a design. What do you mean?"

"You well know what I mean, Miss Harding; it is too late to affect disguse."

"I have indeed heard that the members of this household, and the gossiping country neighbours, attribute to you strange projects of ambition, which may indeed ruin you, if contempt and aversion be ruin; I have heard that they misconstrue—I trust it is so—your character into one of refined artifice, and consummate duplicity."—"Go on," she cried, "I am aware of it all;—they impute to me the meanness of pretending affection for the Lady Jane, and of insinuating myself into her confidence to facilitate bolder designs. It is false, I never loved her;"—I smiled at this superfluous declaration; "and now,—cold-hearted, proud, insolent, insult-

ing girl,—if there be one being on earth I hate with a perfect hatred, 'tis Jane Aulmerle. Yes, it is, it must be so, for I have feelings, pride, will, as strong as the best of ye,—ay, perchance deeper, fiercer;—and here has Fortune placed me to be spurned and buffetted. But what designs are imputed to me? To scheme for my lady's cast gown,—or to bait my hooks for her father's coronet? I thank them for their nobler opinion of me. You are aware, Jane, that such reports are spread by my designing enemies to ruin me, to deprive me of the patronage of my noble, generous benefactor, and the countenance of his friends, and of your family, which would be so much to me in entering on my arduous profession."

There was a *tour de theatre* in the close of this speech, which baffled my straight forward understanding. Jane was silent for a few seconds, then raising her head, she sighed out, "What would I give for a true friend at this most critical time. —I thought that you also hated Jane Aulmerle. Have you not ambition, Jane, rather to appear in the character of the Marchioness of that name, or as the chosen friend and distinguished companion

of the Marchioness, than as the dependent of that proud girl?"

"My ambition to-night does not lead me beyond appearing in my own character. I have to write my mother, and shall be late," I said, I fear angrily. Thus rebuffed, Jane left me; but, in a few minutes, my old friend the sculptor came, commissioned by the Marquis to bring me down stairs. I complied with reluctance. Miss Ford now stood surrounded by a circle of gentlemen, vying with each other in compliments and attentions to the fair actress whom a few hours before they had censured so freely.

Forgetting, or laying aside the recollection of our late meeting, she gently broke from this circle of adorers, won her easy, gliding way towards me, wound her arm within mine, and whispered, "I have resolved to give up the character of Lady Jane Grey to you, Jane. You will appear in it to such advantage, and do it such justice;" and in a lower whisper, "Pendarves is to personate young Dudley; the last scene is now exquisitely pathetic."

Even this bribe did not move me; and as the

Marquis approached us, I found courage or resentment to say, "I don't care who personates young Dudley, or any one else; the character I am most solicitous about is that of Jane Harding; it is that I would wish to play properly at the present moment, if I knew how."

"Play that part as your natural genius dictates, Jane, and I am sure you will do it well, if not wisely," said the Marquis. "And here is Miss Ford about to ensconce herself in the ruff of Elizabeth. I can only wish her a more gallant Leicester than myself.—Can none of you young men take the part of Leicester, for Miss Ford's Elizabeth?" Of course no one could pretend to the princely character of the lover of Elizabeth, in competition with their noble host.

"Miss Ford is very good to give up her original part to me, my lord; but I must be excused; I shall have gone home before the play is performed, even if I did not now hate theatricals."

The Marquis stared, and then smiled,—looked round, and taking my arm led me away to the farther extremity of the apartment, followed, I doubt not, by the eyes of Jane Ford.

"What is wrong, Jane? who has offended you? has my daughter been shewing her imperious temper to you also? what has grieved you?—who has offended or insulted you?—in this house who shall dare to do so, while I am its master?"

"O, no one, no one, my lord, has offended me," I cried, affected by his kindness. "Lady Jane has even been kinder to me than before; if I have any grief it is for her, not caused by her;—if I have any reluctance to go home it is for her sake alone."

"So she was not always very kind," he said; "you *blab* truths, Jane, in spite of yourself. Lady Jane is, to be sure, an object of deep compassion; cruelly compelled, as I am determined she shall be, to act like a reasonable creature, to shew the duty of a daughter, and the complaisance of a friend, to curb her abominable temper, and conduct herself as becomes her age and sex."

"O, not for that, my lord! not for that I pity her; but——"

I hesitated and blushed; and smiling, with some humour he whispered with affected mystery, "But for that other delicate affair at which Jane hinted. It is indeed shocking to think how much young

ladies are doomed to suffer through their horrid papas."

"O, my lord, can you talk thus in mockery of her feelings!" I cried out ere I was aware. "If you could but witness her distress at losing your regard; at seeing you—pardon my presumption—think of a connexion of this strange kind. My mother will be so grieved; my father will *break* his heart;" and I gasped as if I had inadvertently uttered a spell which was to raise a spirit. "You are a bold little girl, Jane; but I like you the better for speaking truth to me;—I believe you have always done so to my daughter. Here, Charlton," he cried to Mr. Pendarves' tutor, and he held me fast till his friend approached; "Can you guess the subject of our conference,—Little Jane is rating me soundly for my bad taste in beauties. Lady Jane has put it into her head, as her own is full of the notion, that crees old fathers are of no use but to save fortunes for their fair young daughters."

"Oh, my lord, don't say so,—fortune is the least thought of Lady Jane; nor, I am certain, did she ever dream of interfering with your freedom of choice; only this unsuitable—" He briskly inter-

rupted me, saying, "What! did not Lady Jane herself commend Miss Ford to my affections, by endowing her with every good quality, every charm under heaven, as long as by flattery she was able to retain my daughter's capricious favour. How unjust she was to yourself, Jane,—how unkind to her poor governess, on the same score."

"She sees with other eyes now, my lord."

"But is it not too late? How can I recede from the engagement which Lady Jane and yourself, besides Mademoiselle and Mrs. White, are somehow so well aware of, though I certainly never breathed a syllable about it. I do admire the unfailing instinct by which the sex, even in infancy, scents out such affairs; here are Charlton and the other gentlemen never would have found me out. Now you see how I am placed,—one Jane stoutly holding, another gently pulling, the third willing to aid the first; but having, I hope, too high a sense of honour to think of breaking the soft, yet strong ties by which she perceives I am held, to the amiable friend she also so warmly recommended to my favour."

"I shall for ever repent it," I cried. "It was great presumption in me either to form or give an opinion in so momentous an affair."

"Besides, Jane, since what my daughter calls my 'infatuated admiration,' has not, it seems, escaped you, more than herself, neither can your joint penetration have failed to discover the amiable partiality with which Miss Ford honours me."

"It is all pretence, my lord,—mere seeming."

He smiled, and added, "I cannot make up my mind to break the fond heart of my little Juliet, even to please my daughter."

I was disconcerted and provoked by this strain of conversation, and by the suppressed ridicule which lurked in the eye of the speaker. I hastened away, and mingled my tears with those of Lady Jane. She informed me that her father had not been *very* unkind to her, but had said so much of her temper, of paternal authority, and of his right to choose for himself, to judge of his own happiness, and to restrain his daughter in her conduct, that she no longer had any hope. "Every one in the family is already changed to me," said she, with proud tears,—"every one, save yourself, Jane,

and poor Mademoiselle. You heard how that saucy, insolent Pendarves spoke of me,—the portionless Jane Aulmerle is a different being, I find, from the great heiress. You heard him invite the minion to lunch at his house, no doubt to be introduced to his mother as a bride-elect. Mrs. Pendarves is so respectable, and well-connected, and so proper a person forsooth, that the Marchioness, under her wing, may fly to any height, to court even. But all is nothing to that vile, ungrateful Martha, for whom I have done and suffered so much. I declare, Jane, —and I am ashamed to tell it,—that I have often, when a child, stolen tea and brandy for her, from Mrs. White, with my own honourable hands. Good heavens, the base set I have lived among! Well may Pendarves sneer at my *domestic* education. And now this wretched woman has been soliciting Jane Ford to take her niece as her waiting-maid. Thus am I repaid."

I offered what consolation I could, and warmly acquitted Pendarves, whose severity of observation had been fully as pointed at former times as now. I think Lady Jane listened with pleasure to his vindication.

"How I wish that I were young enough to go to school," continued the young lady. "If my father would only solicit your mother to take me to live with you,—perhaps it is not yet too late for me to improve myself."

There was warmth and cordiality in the embrace my godmother and myself exchanged on this night.

But too soon, as I deemed, I received the answer of my letter to London. My sister congratulated me on the approaching gaieties of Aulmerle House. She said my mother was peculiarly rejoiced at the intended match, as it must prove the salvation of Lady Jane. Since my visit had drawn to such a length already, my mother had no objection to my remaining with her ladyship till the Marquis and Marchioness returned from their marriage tour to the North. I was farther informed that, though the Marquis had been kind enough to mention that I was to have the honour of being one of the bridemaids, and had requested her to order my dresses the same as those of Lady Jane, my mother thought proper to interfere with this arrangement, and select something for me for the wedding, as becoming, but far cheaper. My father, who was

revising the marriage settlements, was to bring my dresses down himself, and to take charge of the Marchioness's diamonds, though, perhaps, as she would be little abroad in the country, they might lie with the jeweller till she was presented. "And now, Jane, I must tell you more secrets," continued my sister. "The Marquis wished to make you a present, on his marriage, to an amount that my father and mother would not hear of,—not less, I believe, than £500, either in jewels or funded money. This you will not care about, I daresay, so much as you ought; but you will be gratified to learn, that, he added, he was sure he could not gratify your old friend, his Jane, more than by kindness and attention to yourself. He tells my mother that he now regrets that indolence, which the world, when in the vein, calls good-nature, which has made him, for so many years, retain poor Mademoiselle about his daughter,—a plague and a laughing-stock; but that as Lady Jane is to be henceforth under the sole control of the Marchioness, with such assistants as she may appoint for her daughter, he wishes to *annuity* the Frenchwoman, and have her out of the house before his marriage. She has long

been, he says, if not his greatest domestic torment, yet his most teasing plague."

How I got to the end of this letter I cannot tell. I sat staring on the characters when Lady Jane came to seek me to go down stairs with her. She said she now dreaded being alone in the breakfast-parlour with her father and Jane Ford. She was certain she could not command her temper, if even Pendarves flirted with that minion; but that when she became the object of her father's attentions of gallantry, she felt tempted to strike her down. "Now, Jane," she added, "boisterous as I am, with more of the blood of King Hal than the milk and water of my imputed ancestress, Jane Grey, in my veins, I have not lifted my hand since you came to us, I think; and you must save the female peerage the disgrace of my personally inflicting manual chastisement upon her."

"You must accustom yourself to look forward to this event," said I. And she cried, "What event? Jane, there is something wrong." She snatched the letter on which I gazed from my hands, and ran it over as if her glowing eyes would have scorched the paper.

I expected a scene of violence, and was astonished at her calm self-command. She was silent for a time.

"Then Jane," said she, "it is all over, and I have neither home nor father." She winked to shake off the one heavy drop which slowly collected under her eyelash. All her faults, her pride, her caprice, her self-will, were forgotten at this moment; and my heart bled for her sorrows, and throbbed with indignation at her wrongs.

"What is bitterest, Jane, I fear that I have brought much of this upon myself; had I been the daughter, the girl I ought to have been, my father might not so far have forgotten himself!" I would not allow that her faults merited so cruel a punishment; and for myself, I passionately vowed that I should be no bride maid on any such occasion. I would accept of no present, wear no bridal dress, and the friendship of the future Marchioness I for ever disclaimed. How could the Marquis, supposing his doating affection carried himself to such humiliating extremity, talk of placing his woman-grown daughter under the sole control of a person of her own age, and of inferior

condition. While I indulged in these vagaries, Lady Jane sat in meditation. "Jane," she at length said, "I have but one last stake—will you support me in playing it?"

"To the death," I exclaimed; and now, thought I, "wo between us to the Marquis."

"I have pride enough, and to spare," said the young lady, "yet shall my father know that I will spare myself no mortification, which may save him the misery, the infamy of such an alliance. He believes—I am ashamed to speak it—this artful girl enamoured of his person. How our own vanity, Jane, entangles the coils which artifice weaves around us! If this minion be capable of loving any one, 'tis at least not he, nor aught about him, save his fortune and his title. How would the pride of my noble father brook for a rival the stage-struck Dick, the apprentice, transformed into Osmyn, or Don Felix?"

I became impatient for what was to follow. "You must have observed," continued Lady Jane, "about three months since, my continual closetings with Jane Ford, our everlasting tête-a-têtes, and rambles early and late. It was about the time

that, on her suggestion, I was seized with the freak of fitting up the Chinese room in the dairy-house." This was a pretty rustic apartment, which Lady Jane had got papered in the Chinese style, and fitted up with all the antique stores which she fancied from the lumber-room, and ornamented with the superfluous Mandarins, Josses, beakers, odd-looking grotesque vessels, China monsters, and Japan and other *nicknackerie*, accumulated in the mansion by former whimsical ladies. This was her *petite Trianon*, and here she held her female court, or coterie, and gave tea, and received incense. Mademoiselle and myself had rarely been admitted to the honour of joining these parties, at which, however, it seemed less proper visiters had been received.

"I will not confess that Jane Ford has been able to deceive me to any great extent," continued the Lady Jane, "yet when in the Park we first met the low and impudent adventurer, afterwards made known to me as 'Sir Harry Vernon,' —God save the mark!—I believed they met as entire strangers." But I must abridge the narrative of Lady Jane, whom indignation made both

diffuse and warm. By the address of Jane Ford it had been discovered that Sir Harry Vernon, a young gentleman well known to the Lady Jane by name, as he had often been spoken of by her courtiers as a fit match for the heiress, had assumed the travelling name of Belville, mainly to see herself, without being recognised, and partly to indulge a stage-struck fancy, and perplex his guardians and tutor, from whom he had eloped. He was now the *first man* in tragedy, and the *crack* man in comedy, of the strolling company in the neighbouring market town, the admiration of its beauty and fashion, the genteel youth dressing by him, and the girls falling in love by dozens. A story somewhat similar to that insinuated by Jane Ford, was, in fact, current among the town's people; only the name of their hero was Agar—the Honourable Captain Agar. Jane could not precisely discover, she said, which name was the true one,—"no doubt he was somebody—that was plain—confirmed beyond doubt by his equivocal smiling denials."

The parties met frequently in the park, near the dairy-house, which Mr. Belville daily haunted, till a favourable heavy shower, and the polite offer

of an umbrella, procured him the *entrée* of the Chinese *boudoir*.

"Fool as I am, Jane," resumed her ladyship, "I was not for one ten minutes deceived in the Honourable Captain Agar. At our first interviews he had been civil and respectful enough; and I dare say he still wished to be so, but the intoxication of vanity betrayed him. I soon perceived that our stage-struck youth was a mere vulgar, ranting, impudent *coxcomb*, without education or manners. O! how inferior to the arch, demure, little Jane! I believe she began to dread my penetration. At some of his aggravated cockneyisms of sentiment, as well as those habitual ones of expression which slipped out inadvertently, I fancied I once perceived her making signals of caution to our Romeo;—but you know her address—she at once turned off these motions into ridicule. That I should have been such a downright idiot, as, with my eyes open, to continue a clandestine intercourse, which, if open and unrestrained, I would have spurned, is, I presume, another consequence of my *domestic* education. Jane, also, who well knows my temper, began to offer opposition, the sure method to con-

firm me in my perverse course; or perhaps her present game was opening;—she might begin to think it of more advantage to herself to preserve than to ruin the daughter of her patron, especially as she must be involved in the common destruction, or left with no hope, save the fickle favour of her she had betrayed. Whether Jane had any favourite purpose to serve, or that her alarm when I began to receive the billets of my absurd adorer, without her intervention, quickened her prudence, I cannot tell; but the reluctance she betrayed to accompany me to the little theatre, whither I was urged at once by the spirit of contradiction, and the love of adventure, appeared quite natural. I was not, however, so foolish as to let our joint-stock admirer know that I purposed, secretly, to honour his benefit.

"My father fortunately, as I prudently thought, had company, and the established excuse of a headach gave me free opportunity to indulge my whim. Jane secured the key of the hornbeam gate, which entrance to the park is, as you know, very rarely used; and the under-groom agreed to furnish us with ponies and attend us to the town. There was

something exceedingly enticing in the affair; it was indeed very like the rehearsal of an elopement. During our pump-room my spirits were high and gay, but once seated in 'the house,' as the hum it smiled, and to avoid suspicion, separated from June, I became sufficiently uncomfortable. To add to my distress, in this wretched little place, where no one could remain concealed, I perceived not only that our Romeo recognised me, but that the vanity of the puppy entirely overcame his discretion, and helped to disappoint the designs he was accompanying enough to form. That Lady June Antonia, constrained by his 'beautiful eyes,' had been induced to visit the theatre incognito, was a triumph not to be concealed, though the avowal should even put to hazard his hopes on her person and fortune. His ranting speeches, so palpably directed to the place where I sat, and which at another time would have afforded me infinite mirth, became provoking and alarming, especially when one gentleman after another, lounging in this miserable place of amusement, brushed past me, peering under the slouch bonnet with which June had invested my aristocratic brows.

I would have given the world to have been at home, for my impudent Romeo, becoming more and more inattentive to his part, and to his drawling Juliet, now so regularly addressed his love-speeches to my box, as the pillory was called where I sat impaled, that his devotion could no longer be mistaken. How cordially I wished him ten fathoms deep in the vault of all the Capulets! An old gentleman on my right gave me most uneasiness; I had a vision of a weather-beaten marine officer, seen ages ago, or it might be weeks only, so grandly oblivious have I been to such recollections, with whom Mr. Charlton had conversed on terms of kindness and intimacy, in my presence. It was, in fact, in the bookseller's shop of this same town. More than once he contrived to see the face of his left-hand neighbour, and looked as if his humble memory were much more clear and distinct than hers. How I wished, Jane, that *you* had been with me! and how thankful I was when that tattered green curtain dropt! But not yet was the penance of folly past. Neither ponies nor groom were to be found. Our Romeo had managed this, I suppose; and being not only

the favourite of the town, but, as I told you, the crack man of the company, and the man of all work, he must perform in the Entertainment, and I must witness it. 'Vernon has recognised you,' whispered Jane, who stole towards me: 'he has sent me a note saying so, and that he insists on attending us home;—he cannot exist under the idea of *your* flying *alone* by night: but,' said she, in a tone that made my aristocratic blood boil with disdain, 'we must wait a little, as he *must* appear in the entertainment.'

"Sir Harry Vernon,—the Honourable Captain Agar—*must* appear, against his own inclination, in this wretched village barn, and I *must* witness it!" Jane left me, and I was now in the hot fit of a regular attack of dreadfully bad temper—it is vain to deny that. I called her back, and she crept towards me, in her ordinary guise of meek submission, mildly saying that she was here, in the same dilemma with myself, though only in obedience to my absolute commands. I allow, Jane, that neither reason nor truth might, in my vein, have pacified me, but this hollow pretence only served to aggravate my humour; and, looking very wroth,

I vowed that if we did not get away in ten minutes I would run out of the house, and walk back alone to Aulmerle Park. Jane soothed, entreated, and counselled me, and I sat on, unable to help myself. To increase my embarrassment, my next neighbour became more and more attentive to my motions, and, as a trap, I presume, suddenly whispered, 'Would your ladyship favour me with a sight of your bill of the play?' I at once fell into the snare—the tortured, twisted paper I held in my hand, was tendered, ere Jane, with ready address, whispered aloud, "Do pray, *Miss Smith*, make a little way," and pushing up on the bench, gave me time to recollect myself. My old neighbour returned the tattered bill, which he had opened up with caution, to examine, with the aid of his spectacles, the name of our hero. With a bow of great meaning, he thanked me for the loan. At length, to my infinite relief, the *Entertainment* closed, and Romeo, still in the dress of some bandit chief or other, had flown round to join us in that dim-lighted passage through which we groped, whispering rapturous thanks for the *condescension* —entreating we would honour him for a few mi-

nutes, while the ponies were got out 'at a small refection—not at 'the Star and Garter,' but his own humble lodging—his landlady was a decent, good sort of creature.' Imagine my indignation! 'Only his friend Edward Adolphus Quin, who had performed County Paris, was to be present.'

"If not prudent, Jane, you will own I am passionate enough. I pushed into the street—up, along,—without looking to right or left, my overawed attendants following me. I knew I was on the homeward road; I disdained to think that creatures so despicable could, would, or durst offer obstruction or opposition to my sovereign will. In the lane where the groom and ponies were to be in waiting at the end of the play, was, to be sure, the groom, much intoxicated, but not quite deprived of his reason, as he was damning himself, but he would stand by his lady; giving me to understand that he had hitherto been prevented from coming to me, and had burst away by force of arms. I was driven to my wits' end, and pausing for a few seconds, to gain breath and time for reflection, my attendants, or pursuers, I know not which to call them, came up, Jane with tears entreating my for-

bearance, and my adoring Belville deprecating my displeasure by every form of protestation. They were followed by a chaise, which halted in the lane —'he had taken the freedom to order this conveyance—he would forthwith expire under the idea of exposing me to the night air—it would take us to the hornbeam gate, and all would be well.'

"The drunken groom, who, stupified as he was, still retained some glimmer of understanding, saved me the trouble of refusing this conveyance. He swore his lady should go into no coach, chay, wain, or car, that night; that he would defend her to the last drop of his blood—'that, to be sure, she had a devil of a temper—a chip of the old block for that; but for all that she was my lord's daughter;' and a challenge to a boxing-match passed in terms I do not choose to remember, between my champion and my admirer. "I scorn to think," continued the haughty lady, drawing herself up on her seat, "that those despicable creatures, in whose power I had placed myself, durst have imagined violence —no, no: they were too base, too cowardly to have attempted aught save by fraud and trickery.

I, however, placed myself against the wall, and vowed I would not stir from that spot, save on my own horse—or my own feet; I commanded them to leave me with Jane, and I told her that I would walk back to the town, till our ponies were found. I presume I must have conquered single-handed; yet I knew not whether to rejoice or grieve when an unexpected ally, or champion, appeared in the person of my late neighbour in the theatre, the old, shattered half-pay, who had followed us, and overheard the altercation.

"'You wish to reach your home, madam?—your *father's* house?—will you confide in me so far as to place yourself and *your friend* under my protection?—I will see you *safely home.*'

"With entire confidence and thankfulness," I replied, "I place myself and *my friend* in the hands of a gentleman—of one known, also, or I am deceived, to some of my friends." My protector bowed, and said to the other party, "You may return to your lodgings, gentlemen—your services are unnecessary for this night." They sneaked back, County Paris muttering that his friend Belville had urged him hither—he, for his part, knew

nothing of the affair. Disgusted as I had been, I was still more provoked to see our pitiful Romeo so easily cowed. He bristled up for a minute, but my veteran defender, tucking me very coolly, as I thought, under his effective arm, merely bade him 'begone.' Jane Ford trembling clung to the other arm, or sleeve, and in this order we quitted the field. Oh the bathos of such rencounters! The post-boy with his empty chaise now began to clamour about "who was to pay him and his 'orses?" I knew not whether to cry or laugh—I suppose all our purses were alike empty, but my champion, being known to the postilion, had credit. He handed us into the chaise, and followed us:—we drove on in silence for a few miles, before I tried to make my confused acknowledgments. Jane then artfully insinuated, that she had been forced into this frolic, in spite of her better judgment; and I think the honest old soldier believed her. 'It is past now,' he said; 'I shall find means to make those strolling puppies silent, though it should be by cropping out their impudent tongues.' In short, the veteran behaved to me with the greatest delicacy, and, I have no doubt, honour. I shall be

obliged to him while I live. And now for the *dénouement*, as my old associates would term it.—Next evening my maid brought me a packet, with all those marks of secrecy waiting gentlewomen like so well to assume, whispering that it had been confided to her by the servant of Captain ———, my half-pay veteran protector, with orders to convey it to my own hands. It enclosed the whole correspondence of Jane Ford with the "*soi-disant* Vernon, from the time she had left London till the day of our attending the theatre, of which purpose she had secretly apprised him:—Precious revelation! I believe she has no suspicion whatever of my being possessed of this record of her infamy and treachery, and of my own mad folly; if she had, she would still believe she had me too much in her power to dread disclosures. How little she knows my strain! Here are those precious letters, Jane;—mine, it appears, are in the safe custody of this arch-traitress, ready to appear against me if I shall dare to whisper aught that displeases her. Even this I will brave—proud as I am called—since nothing short of this will open the eyes of my infatuated father."

I became almost sick as Lady Jane went on indignantly repeating the language employed in this correspondence, in speaking of herself, and the schemes and hopes formed in relation to her father. I knew not what to advise; and I ended the conference at this time, by suggesting that Lady Jane should either put herself into the hands of Mr. Charlton, the old, tried friend of the family, and a man of honour and sense, who practically knew the world, or into those of the Honourable Mrs. Pendarves, for whom I knew the Marquis had the highest esteem. We, however, came to no conclusion; or rather, the breakfast bell interrupted the conference.

The gentlemen, when we entered the breakfast-room, were busily engaged with the newspapers. Pendarves alone lounged at a window, playing with a little spaniel belonging to Lady Jane, having seduced its affections from its lawful mistress. Mademoiselle was to him a continual butt and source of amusement; not that he ever treated her with rudeness or incivility; on the contrary, he delighted to aggravate her humours by what he called *petits soins*, and gallant flatteries; which she

was not quite convinced were paid altogether to herself individually, but yet considered herself well entitled to receive as gouvernante; as one in the place of mother to his future bride, and as the polisher of his own manners. To him it did not appear needful that any one besides himself should either perceive or enjoy the fund of amusement Mademoiselle's absurdities at all times afforded; so that bystanders were often at a loss to decide whether his homage were serious or mockery. It was probably like the homage paid by many men to many ladies, convertible, according to circumstances, into either sense, at the caprice of the bestower.

It was one of Mademoiselle's immutable privileges in the family to deal out coffee to the Marquis at breakfast, and he often waited her endless morning demi-toilette with patience he never would have shown in the case of any reasonable woman, of whatever rank.

"Do you think it would be possible, little Jane," said he, on the present morning, smiling to me over his Courier, "to smuggle me a cup of any liquid without Mademoiselle knowing or suspecting?"

"Don't attempt it, my lord," cried Pendarves, who seemed to fancy this petty tyranny one of Mademoiselle's most amusing points. "She would certainly poison Miss Harding to-morrow as an usurper, and yourself as a traitor to French coffee.—But here she comes!—and in such a sort!" The speaker ran out of the room, but returned on tiptoe, following Mademoiselle, who flung herself into a chair in the most violent emotion, every one crowding round her with questions. "Was it a mad dog had chased her?—or the bull, whose bellowings threw her into fits though heard two miles off, and with the security of three walls and a ha-ha?"

"Non, non, non!—vorser and vorser!" cried the lady.

"I am afraid the mad dog has not only met but bit her," whispered the Marquis. "My dear Mademoiselle, pray compose yourself; in what shape has the alarming apparition appeared to you, which has only cooled our coffee?"

"A gentleman, mi lord—of grand toilette—vat you call *dandi*, Mr. Pendarf."

"Ah, Mademoiselle,!" cried Pendarves archly; "and the *dandi* had well-nigh whisked you into

the coach and six waiting without the Park pales?" —"And you behold dat?—non—ni six—ni quatre—but vat you call buggy; you think he make devoirs to me:—no such ting—sur l'honneur. L'insolent! I give *Moofti* de airing," and here she paused to caress the ugly poodle so honoured. "Moofti, he run down the fillebeard walks; I call Moofti, Moofti; out spring mon dandi, and catch me so—*plombe;*" —and she dipped, stretching out her skinny arms to clasp Pendarves, who stood the demonstration heroically.—"I see you, he cry, you, ma belle ange—ah—h—h—h! non, dat old French vitch; yes, he call me vitch, vitch—old vitch!—bête—insolent." Mademoiselle drummed rapidly with her little feet on the carpet till part of her fury escaped by this medium; then, brought somewhat to her senses by the smile some of her hearers could not suppress, she rose with dignity, saying, "Pray, pray, Monsieur Pendarf be so troublesome as ring de bell?"—"Nay, had I not better sally forth, seek and chastise on the spot the recreant knight, whose unhallowed lips durst term a fair lady a witch?"—"I am afraid the time is past," said Jane Ford, in one of her liquid whispers, "even supposing the gentleman other than 'an idle

coinage of the brain,' the effect of the oblique or double vision of Mademoiselle."

Mademoiselle had sharp ears, if her eyes were faulty—" Vat you was pleased to say, Miss Fort?—*dooble!* ma foi! Dere be in dis monde here de dooble see, and de dooble hear, and de dooble deal too, ma petite—which be vorser?" Jane flushed to scarlet; her eyes emitted one lightning flash, and were then veiled under their soft lids, her aspect becoming as mild, sweet, and composed as before. One supplicating look she cast on Pendarves, as if beseeching him to remain, but he was in the humour of adventure, and seizing Mademoiselle's long Parisian knit scarf, he went off, vowing to drag the traitor to her feet in those silken fetters.

Pendarves had not been gone ten minutes when he returned, leading in, by the scarf around his neck, a country oaf, whose comic face of amazement and open-mouthed horror, made an amusing contrast with Mademoiselle's indignation at the profanation of her garniture. I know not how it chanced that my eye, amidst the general mirth, was attracted to Jane Ford. She sat writhing backwards on

her chair, as if to screen herself behind the sculptor, next to whom she was placed at the breakfast-table, her colour changing to every hue, and fixing in a livid, leaden paleness.

"I have not been able to catch the caitiff *dandi*, Mademoiselle," said Pendarves:—"he must have hid himself in some of these filbert shells of the walk where he lay concealed; but this, I have reason to believe, is his ambassador, or *charge d'affaires*, bearing documents of high value and import. Single out your lady, and deliver, my friend. That is Miss Harding, if you seek her."

"Noa, sir—that she be'ent," responded the lad:—"yon be her,"—and he peered round to Jane Ford.—"I seed she before," and he nodded to her.

"But the letters you bear are addressed to Miss Harding, fellow,—Miss Jane Harding;—did you not shew them to me but now?"

"And that be she:—good morrow, Miss:—I comed to the old place—and this grand merry spark drawn me on 'fore the gentlefolks, willy nilly, as they say'n."

Jane was now compelled to recognize her old acquaintance. She took—she even snatched the

letters from him, and bade him retire. She thrust them hastily into her reticule, bowing to me, with a look of much meaning, and yet in a hurried, agitated way.

"Nay, why don't you claim your own letters, Miss Harding?" said Pendarves gravely. "I beg pardon—perhaps I have gone too far in introducing the messenger."

"I have no letters—I expect none," I cried, reddening and distressed.

"Why, Mr. Pendarves, will you meddle with ladies' matters?—never heed him, Jane—I shall settle it all:—*our* letters are quite safe," she added, with forced gaiety and assumed composure; and she smiled intelligently to me.

"For me they may be so;—I know nothing of them nor of their bearer," I said, in displeasure. "Neither you do," rejoined Jane. "Pray, pray, gentlemen, let me beg your attention to your rolls and butter." The eyes of the Marquis were, I *felt*, fixed on me in curious scrutiny—so were those of my old friend, the sculptor, but more anxiously, ere he whispered me, "If those letters be addressed to you, Jane, why are they not delivered to

yourself ?"—" Because they are not for me—I know nothing of them."

" Very strange !——very strange indeed that you don't finish your breakfasts, gentlemen, and the horses at the door !" said Jane, forcing a laugh, and twisting the ribbons of her bag round her arm.

" Nay, thus I make prize of this intercepted Twopenny postbag," cried my old friend, striking his fork through the reticule, and pinning it to the table, where he smilingly held it down. " Good heavens !" cried Jane, starting to her feet, and struggling to draw away her reticule—" My Lord —nay, sir, you cannot, as a gentleman, as the friend of Miss Harding's family"——" As the friend of Jane Harding I do this, Miss Ford," said he, very solemnly ; and rising, I exclaimed " I thank you, —I have no concealments, no mysteries ;—if you love me clear me of all this ! My lord—my dear sir—open, read whatever is addressed to me—I entreat it of your justice—nay of your mercy."

" Resume your seat, Miss Ford," said the Marquis sternly,—" sit down, Jane"—we both obeyed. Lady Jane drew near me, whispering " I think it won't be necessary *to peach*,—the green bag will

do it." Her eye glanced in triumph to the detected culprit, who trembled so violently, that her very teeth chattered in their sockets. Deliberately my old friend took the packet, read aloud the address "To Miss Jane Harding, Aulmerle Park, to be given into her own hands,"—and broke the seal. The first sentence threw the circle into astonishment—the next drew forth bursts of laughter from the gentlemen.—"*Adorable Marquise!* you clever little devil! so you have fairly hooked the Don. But I must rehearse from the night I last saw your beautiful eyes, alongside of the Semiramis in——— Theatre. For fear of any unlucky *contre-temps* I once more enclose to the girl Harding."

"Enough," cried the Marquis, snatching the curious epistle which he laid down before Jane, —"My steward goes to London to-day to bring down my friend Harding, with a scroll of my marriage settlements. If it be perfectly convenient for Miss Ford, this I think will be a favourable opportunity for her returning to town." The parched lips of the wretched girl could not articulate the words of thanks, which they mechanically moved as if to utter, though without any degree

of consciousness on the part of the speaker. She staggered as she rose, and I was springing forward to help her, when Pendarves humanely gave her his arm. A long embarrassed pause of silence followed their exit. It was first broken by the Marquis.

"Miss Ford is a young person of very considerable talent," he said,—"in the art of simulated passion of great talent. I was vain enough to suppose that in the histrionic art I was her master; I find she has had earlier and abler instructors."

"We have been rehearsing 'All in the Wrong,'" said Mr. Charlton, trying to give the conversation a lighter turn.

"With the afterpiece, or entertainment of the 'Taming of the Shrew,'" cried Lady Jane, raising her bright eyes, as Pendarves re-entered.

"Yes," said the Marquis, "and for the able support Miss Ford has given me in that afterpiece, I not only forgive her failure in the former play, but conceive myself largely her debtor—her pecuniary debtor to any extent Mrs. Harding shall judge proper—and in any mode which she considers best for the unhappy girl."

"Lest we go farther astray," continued the Marquis, "I depute you, Mr. Charlton, to say a few words to the goodly company before the curtain drop —particularly to little Jane, and to you, Pendarves, —I must explain matters myself behind the scenes to my own Jane." He led his daughter into a backward apartment which opened by folding doors from the one we were in; and the rest of the party disappearing, left us alone with Mr. Charlton.

"The arrangements of this family are no secret to you, Edward:—I am sure Miss Harding is also aware that Mrs. Pendarves does my friend the Marquis the honour to accept of his hand. Their marriage has been settled for three months."

"Three months!" I exclaimed, and looked to Pendarves.

"Yes, Jane, see how the old folks have cheated us. I am to have the felicity of calling *our* Lady Jane *sister* it seems; I doubt not that I shall prove a most affectionate brother."

"You don't know yet what you may prove, young man," said Mr. Charlton.

"Nothing, I assure you, sir, that my betters speculate upon, unless sister Jane turn out a very

different woman from what she lately promised. If her friend June can certify to me, on honour and conscience, at the end of our three years' pilgrimage abroad, that Lady Jane deserves me, I shall not break my poor mother's heart by making a vow against her new daughter. My mother's testimony I will not receive. She has set her soul on this alliance, and I believe half marries herself to secure it."

After running on in this serio-comic fashion, he took my hand, and said more gravely,—"I depend on you, June; you are Lady Jane's tried friend; I have long marked your conduct to her;—I have more judgment, I assure you, than Mr. Charlton chooses to give me credit for. Be her friend being mine. I wish to gratify my poor mother. I also admire. I have ever admired, the beauty, the spirit of Jane Aulmerle;—a spice of the devil I could forgive in a lady of rank, but Jane's intolerable arrogance no man should brook, were he but an English cobbler, instead of an English gentleman. I admire her beauty, her talents, and the—the——"—"Shall I help you out?" cried his friend and tutor,—"the many little and great fit-

nesses, and conveniences that recommend this match,—these you value as a man of sense; but as a man of sense, and honour, and principle, you cannot for a moment balance against those higher qualities"—"Which I consider indispensable in a wife," interrupted the young man. "Now, Jane, you see it all;—I am to be off to-morrow morning. Though it is vastly pleasant to have one's mother made a Marchioness, and though I take heaven to witness, there is no man I esteem more than my Lord Aulmerle—yet somehow—Well, no matter about this. You will tell me, on my return, if Lady Jane deserves me. You laugh, but *deserves* is the very word; and if there be any chance of a reasonable man making her happy."—While he talked aloud in this strain the Marquis called me into the inner room. He sat on a couch with his daughter, her face resting on his shoulder. I saw that she had been weeping; but I hoped that the scalding drops which fell silently, were neither those of anger nor of a very bitter sorrow. Her father resigned his place to me, and Lady Jane buried her face in my neck, while her clasped arms wound round me. As soon as she came a little to herself,

and found that we were alone, she whispered vehemently—"It is all over, Jane—an evil, much, much less than I lately anticipated:—my father has been kind, very kind to me—but still it is a hard, hard thing to lose one's father."

"Or one's mother," said Pendarves, who had joined us without being perceived by Lady Jane. He spoke in a half-comic, half-sulky voice, which yet betrayed sympathy with Jane's present feelings. She raised her head. "But then to gain a brother! Lady Jane—and such a brother!" he added in a mock-heroic tone. Lady Jane smiled now, and held out her hand proudly and gracefully, which Pendarves, suddenly grave, kissed with respect. She blushed, and drew back embarrassed, discovering more natural sensibility than she was believed by either of us to possess. There was, indeed, a slight degree of embarrassment among us all.

Lady Jane spoke first.

"I must say, Mr. Pendarves, that you have been tolerably successful in misconstruing every action of mine, and in thinking the worst possible of me."

"Pardon me, Lady Jane—of your faults I have

striven to think the best possible,—it is not my blame if my understanding won't wink, when my —perhaps my—*fraternal regard*, would bid it. But we are now both to be put on our trials—let us see who behaves best henceforth, and let our friend Jane be umpire."

"Done, Pendarves!" cried the lady frankly, and again extending her hand to ratify the bargain; but before it could be formally sealed, she quickly drew it back, crying, "Nay, I must not tax your new-born, brotherly love, so far, and so frequently. Besides, I take you at 'vantage. I am half-reformed already; and with such a motive as you were generous enough to hold out, just now, in my hearing, while in the next room"——

"Nay, Lady Jane, I may have been presumptuous—but truth"——

"Nay, leave us now, brother Edward; and don't spoil a good scene with a lame explanation."

"Our mother says I am to have the honour of finding you her substitute in correspondence while I am abroad, Lady Jane."

"I dare not disobey *our* mother, Mr. Edward."

"And if Miss Jane add her little postscript,"

said he, looking to me,—and Lady Jane took up the sentence:—

"Such as 'Lady Jane, I am happy to say, has not been in a passion above three times this week.' 'Lady Jane has not been seized with one of her silent rages since Sunday, when her Papa ordered her to shew rather less incivility to the Curate's wife. Lady Jane, on being lately asked by old Captain —— how she did, with hopes she had caught no cold at the theatre, replied, with wonderful condescension, that she was pretty well considering; and hoped that her new brother Pendarves, would in his own way acknowledge the exceeding kindness, and honourable treatment she had received from that veteran; as she chose rather to place herself in her brother's hands, than have her little faults travel out of the family." Her tone became very earnest as she proceeded; and Pendarves, who perfectly understood to what she alluded, appeared delighted with the thoughtfulness and generosity of the speech, and with the confidence it implied in himself:—he warmly shook hands with us both,—saying, now indeed he was sure he had found a sister. On his departure I had a long and kind, and unreserved

conversation with my young godmother, whom I found perfectly reasonable on every point, save the unhappy Jane Ford; on this we agreed to observe a truce. While we were still conversing, that unfortunate girl drove off. For the remainder of her story I must refer you, my good friends, to my sister's story of the *Talented Family*, where Jane again appears.

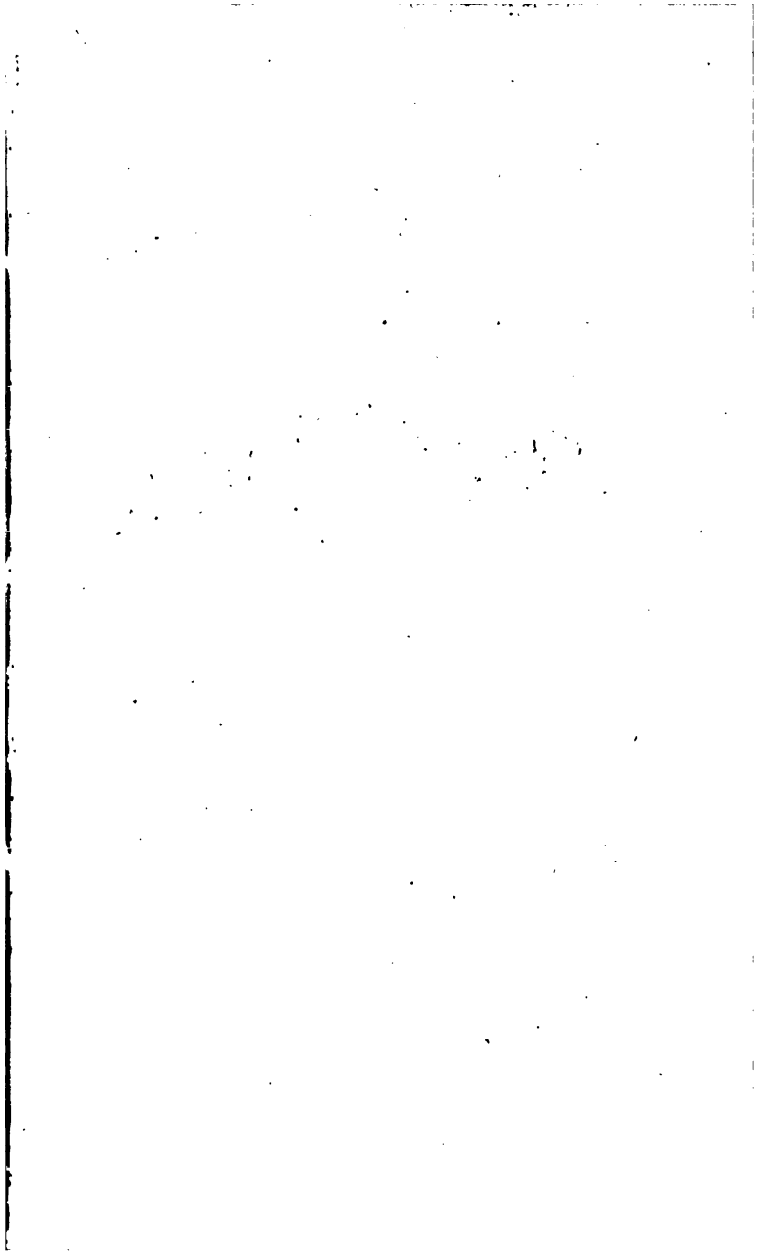
As soon as she was fairly off, the Marquis joined us and rallied us both, on our sagacious penetration into love-plots, and fondness for discovering romantic adventures and perplexities in common affairs. I was heartily ashamed of my own share in those absurdities, and looked like a simpleton, I presume; when he said, pinching an ear of each lady, "Go, monkeys, to your plain-work and embroidery, for five years to come;—you had almost made a fool of me, as well as of yourselves,—perhaps the greatest of the three. But if one Jane be cured of her pride, another checked in her enthusiasm, and the third painfully taught the folly of her silly and false ambition—ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

Nothing now remained to me but to sooth the hysterics, and dry the tears of Mademoiselle. Poor

Mademoiselle with her "good French heart," her happy French temper, certainly loved me, though I believe the original and moving cause of her regard, was, that I had been taught dancing by a French female professor. To this she attributed all the virtues which she imputed to me; my good temper,—my politeness,—my obligingness, all sprung from the one cause. I was deputed to break her dismissal to her. It was softened by every delicate attention, and by liberal presents, meant to mend her small *pension*, with *sa bonne tante* at Amiens, of whom I liked to hear her speak with so much affection, and to whose little home she had invited me a thousand times. She had always insisted so vehemently on her misery, in the sad sojourn of our land of fog and *ennui*, that I believed her, till I found that she resembled her countryman, the lover, who liked to leave his mistress that he might speak about her. At our melancholy parting she would have forced upon me her pearl ear-rings,—her best crucifix,—even her *cachmere*, if I could have accepted of such valuable pledges of her friendship. She sat night and day framing devices to be given as *souvenirs* to her English friends.

The French are said to excel in the expression of sentiment. Mademoiselle's gift to myself was most emphatic. On the centre of a gold-bordered hand-screen was painted a bouncing heart, of almost full size, cleft, riven, rent—emblem of her own —by grief understood, though the marks were more like those of the cleaver. The bleeding emblem was surmounted by a scroll bearing, in a genuine French hand, the legend,

Broking for parting you!

When this was found under my plate, on the morning that Mademoiselle set off for Amiens, under the escort of Pendarves and his travelling companion, I cannot tell whether grief or mirth predominated with me. The Marquis certainly laughed very heartily. I slipt away my token, which I have carefully preserved; while he said, "And these are the governesses we bring over to take charge of the education of English girls of family! We give up their childhood to the vulgar sycophant Marthas, and their youth if not to artful Jane Fords, yet to frivolous, half-educated foreigners, always strangers to our habits, our manners, our very language; and then wonder that they grow

up heartless, arrogant, ignorant, and shallow; and that the middle ranks of society boast more accomplished, and better educated, as well as more amiable women than—HIGH LIFE.